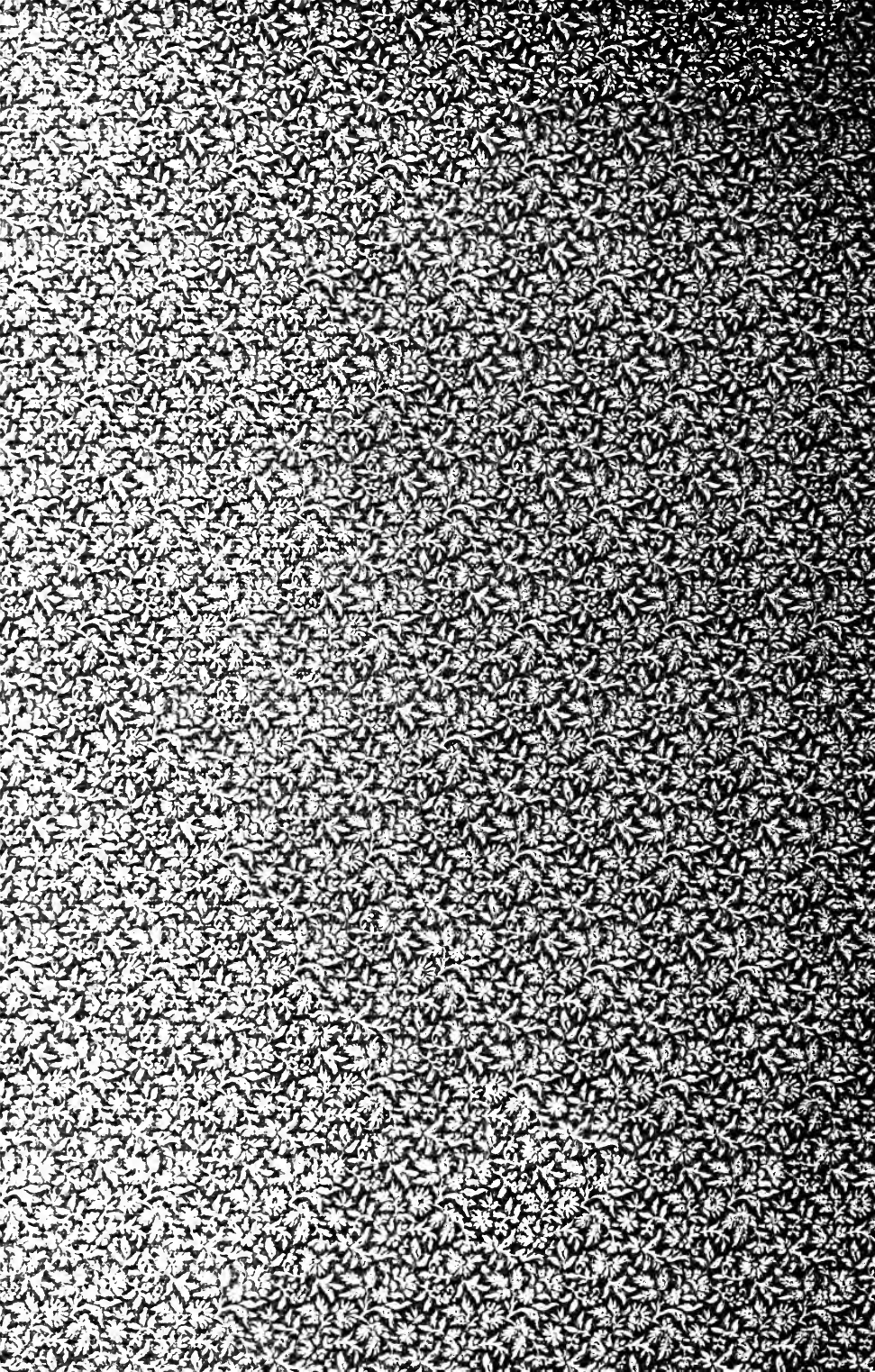
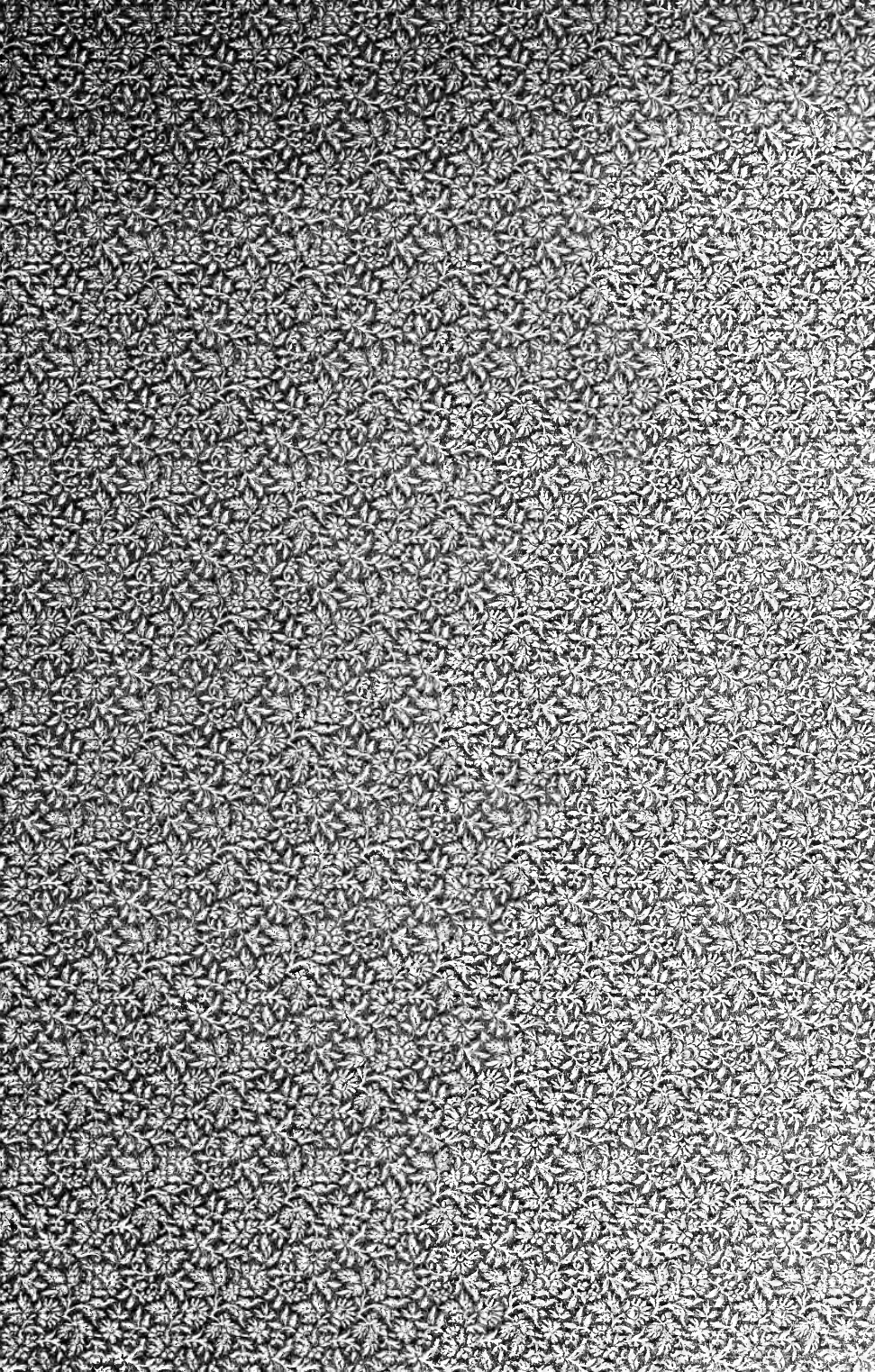


The Book-Hunter in PARIS



OCTAVE UZANNE







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THE BOOK-HUNTER IN PARIS

SHORTLY WILL BE PUBLISHED,
UNIFORM WITH
THE BOOK-HUNTER IN PARIS.

THE BOOK-HUNTER
IN LONDON,

WITH
MUCH CURIOUS AND ENTERTAINING
INFORMATION AND MANY
ILLUSTRATIONS.

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THE
BOOK-HUNTER IN PARIS

*STUDIES AMONG THE BOOKSTALLS
AND THE QUAYS*

BY
OCTAVE UZANNE


WITH A PREFACE BY AUGUSTINE BIRRELL,
AUTHOR OF 'OBITER DICTA,' 'RES JUDICATÆ,' ETC.



LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1893

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PREFACE.

 *I*N these vocal days, when there are books about almost everything under the sun, no one need wonder that so quaint a fraternity as the stall-keepers on the quays of the Seine should have a volume all to themselves. They have a place in French history, these men; their trade, which by the beginning of the seventeenth century had learnt to cluster round the Pont Neuf, has travelled through vicissitudes peculiar to itself, and survived revolutions destructive of interests vaster than its own; these humble vendors of old books have been proclaimed as nuisances, obstructing the highway, denounced as receivers of stolen goods, and informed against as cheapeners of the well-housed stock of the authorized booksellers who kept shop, and paid rent, rates, and taxes. M. Uzanne makes us acquainted with the precise terms of royal edicts and decrees levelled at the heads of these open-air traders, who, however,

as was indeed befitting, seem usually to have had friends at Court, who managed to prevent such an administration of the law as must have exterminated the whole tribe.

And so it has come to pass that the stall-keepers on the quays of the Seine survive even unto this day to excite the curiosity of every vagrant bookhunter who visits the most charming city in the world.

M. Uzanne has collected a vast deal of heterogeneous information about these ancient stall-keepers, their ups and downs, and the buffets of fortune to which both they and their wares have been exposed. He tells us how from his lodgings he can see, from the Pont Royal to the Pont des Arts, the long line of stalls which border if they do not decorate the Seine. 'This picture,' says he, 'which is always under my eye, I have but to give life to, but to arouse from slumber its historic tradition, only to analyze its different moods, and to narrate the legends of the chief characters who go to make up its quaint personality. This task,' adds M. Uzanne, 'is relatively easy.'

Frenchmen are reported to find most tasks easy. They have certainly great resources. To a dull Englishman nothing can well seem more difficult than the work M. Uzanne has set himself to perform. To awaken slumbrous traditions and to make a long line of departed stall-keepers by the Seine live over again in a printed page is a job which would burden the patience of a Balzac, and weary the pictorial imagination of

a Carlyle ; but M. Uzanne at all events attempts it in good faith, and concludes it in good spirits.

One is glad to note that our author almost entirely discards the traditional, affected, sham-emotional style of the book-hunter—that style which in the heavy hand of the Rev. Dr. Dibdin becomes so unutterably wearisome and repulsive. There is surely no need for a lover of old books to write about them in a strain of maudlin sentiment. The fact is, almost as much nonsense has been written about books as in them. To listen to some people you might almost fancy it was within their power to build a barricade of books, and sit behind it mocking the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. It is all, or nearly all, a vain pretence. Book-hunting is a respectable pursuit, an agreeable pastime, an aid to study, but so are many other pastimes and pursuits ; and well would it have been if the historians of book-hunting had caught but a little of the graceful simplicity and sincerity of an Izaak Walton or a Gilbert White. But no ! for the most part these historians are masses of affectation, boasters of bargains, retailers of prices, never touching the heart or refining the fancy. Gilbert White has made many naturalists, Izaak Walton many an angler ; but sham raptures over rare volumes, and bombastic accounts of bygone auctions, have never helped to swell the ranks of the noble army of book-hunters.

M. Uzanne is justly scornful of the old-fashioned bouquiniste who would have you believe that when he was young the

humblest stall in Paris, London, or Amsterdam creaked with treasure to be redeemed for a few sous, pence, or gröschen. The time has really gone by for rapturous stories about old purloiners like 'Snuffy Davy,' who, as Sir Walter Scott has told the world, bought in Holland, Caxton's 'Game of Chess' for twopence-halfpenny, and sold it for £20—its present value being perhaps £700. We live now in instructed times. Book-sellers by their catalogues have produced an astonishing uniformity of price. There are fashions and foibles, high prices and low; but there are now in the book-market prices current. And honesty thrives thereby. The sooner the young book-hunter forgets all about 'Snuffy Davy' the better, both for his morals and his collection. Fine libraries are not made up of bargains and lucky 'finds,' but are the result of patient study and persistent and courageous buying. 'Nulla dies sine libro' is a good maxim of behaviour, by steady adherence to which a plain man may hope to live to see himself surrounded by a library, small indeed, but well selected, as the phrase runs.

Book-hunting overleaps the narrow boundaries of nations. I know a Russian Count who is a keen collector of so mere a modernity as Cruikshank, and whose tea-table groans with the catalogues of English booksellers, which he scans with an attention which never seems to flag.

It adds zest to travel to be ever on the alert in this matter. Aulus Gellius, as M. Uzanne very properly reminds us, on

landing at Brindisi, ran with the eagerness of the true book-hunter to examine the contents of a bookstall which immediately met his eye. He found there, dirty and dusty, Aristæus of Proconesus, Ixogonos of Nicæa, Ctesias Onesicritus, and others, whose names, he adds, are but of mediocre authority. However, the good Aulus purchased them, apparently for no better reason than that the price was reasonable. It is usually the mediocre author who abounds on bookstalls, though famous authors in superseded editions, or authors once famous but superseded altogether, are seldom absent. But books die away even from the stalls. A quarter of a century ago no English stall was without its 'Zimmermann on Solitude,' or its Hervey's 'Meditations,' its Gessner's 'Death of Abel,' or its Newton's 'Cardiphonia.' These familiar though woebegone volumes no longer catch my eye; but perhaps my sight grows dim, and they are still there, bewailing the fickle taste of man.

In France, so M. Uzanne tells us, old-fashioned editions of La Harpe, Buffon, L'Encyclopédie, the works of Voltaire and Rousseau, correspond to our Gibbon, Robertson and Hume, and Flavius Josephus, that learned Jew.

It is a tribute to the enormous reputation of Shakespeare that he has never become a regular inmate of the stall. You will not often find Rowe's edition, or Pope's, or Theobald's, or even Johnson's, doing penance in the open air. Robertson is, perhaps, the most 'exposed' author in Great Britain.

In Catholic countries books of devotion play a part unknown

to us, who, indeed, have none indigenous to ourselves save Jeremy Taylor's 'Holy Living and Dying'—none, I mean, of great popularity. In France they fill whole boxes. Such comparisons are not without interest.

The French have a feeling for books and bindings which imparts a peculiar grace and dignity to the pursuit of book-hunting as there carried on. The phrase 'secondhand bookseller' has with us a soiled sound, and yet what sort of a bookseller is he who is content to supply the books of the year?

It is only necessary to read the book-catalogues of Messrs. Morgand and Fatont, of the Passage des Panoramas, to renounce once and for ever the abominable heresy that a bookseller properly so-called is a shopkeeper who supplies you with envelopes and paper, and new books at a discount of threepence in the shilling. No! the true bookseller is even as are Messrs. Morgand and Fatont. But these glorified beings are dear; their 'secondhand' books were once owned by emperors and kings and princes of the Church, their wives, and their concubines. Famous craftsmen, with names as well known as Francia or Cellini, laboured those bindings, and gilded those leaves. They are not for all markets. The millionaires of the New World are eager to possess them, and who dare blame them? 'Snuffy Davy,' with his scarecrow visage and threadbare raiment, has no place provided for him in the Passage des

Panoramas. He must carry his gröschen to the banks of the Seine, where, though he will find no Caxtons, not even any early Molières, he may yet so far gratify his felonious instincts as to buy for a franc something which in course of time may be priced at a napoleon.

But it is time I myself returned to the quays, where, so M. Uzanne tells us, 150 stall-keepers, mustering 1,636 boxes between them, are still to be found in fair days and foul, plying their ancient trade, not without profit. But I return to them only to bid them farewell, for to describe them is another's business.

The true hero of this book, however, is not a stall-keeper but a book-hunter, the late M. Xavier Marmier, a scholar, an academician, an author, and a Christian, who, when he came to die, was moved by his native kindness of disposition and the memories of a happy life to insert in his last will and testament a bequest of 1,000 francs to the bookstall-keepers on the quays of the left bank, to be spent in a good dinner. 'This,' adds the admirable testator, 'must be my acknowledgment for the many hours I have lived intellectually in my almost daily walks on the quays between the Pont Royal and the Pont Saint Michel.'

The pious wish of this lovable old man was duly regarded on the 20th of November, 1892. Ninety-five stall-keepers dined on the second floor in one of Véfour's rooms. In the appendix to this volume will be found both the menu and the speech of

the chairman, M. A. Choppin d'Arnouville. The kind reader will do well to study both, and to drink at the next opportunity to the dear and gentle memory of M. Xavier Marmier, scholar and book-hunter by the quays of the Seine.

A. B.

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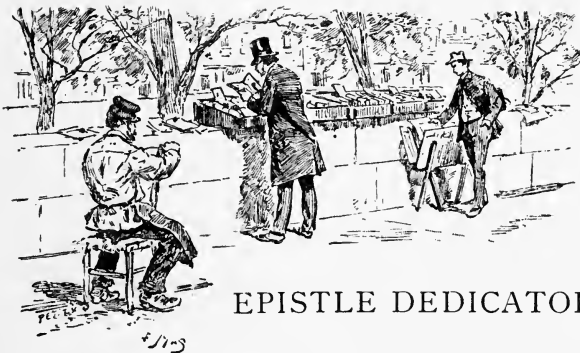
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EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO THE STALL-KEEPERS ON THE QUAYS

OF THE

GENTLE RIVER SEINE.



QUIETLY or not as you may in your modesty protest, it is to you, philosophers of the open air and of the trivial gain, that this book should be offered. To you who, unchanging and uncomplaining, stand sentinel from morn to eve over the wrecks of human thought that, by chance, languor, dislike, or the inconstancy of fashion, have drifted into your primitive trays, as into an 'old clo'' store of impressions, to tempt once more the curiosity of the passer-by, enrich the imagination of the poor, or excite, by the search for facts, the restless passion of the learned.

To you, in truth, should be its dedication, for you were the

inspirers of this new book, which, sooner or later, after running through its fortune in the springtime of its newness, and submitting to the inevitable destiny of things, may, in the autumn of its prosperity, founder in your haven of the disinherited, as the stained and faded leaves once freshly green are whirled above your heads by the aggressive November blast, to fall among so many other leaves on the cold parapets of the Seine.

Torn and damp and soiled, some squally day this book, now so trim in its bibliophilic dandyism, will reach you : and then, probably for the first time, you may read it as you sit on your lowly seats on the breezy quays, vaguely conscious of the hasty footsteps on the asphalt, and the fragments of mundane dialogue borne to you on the wind.

You will read it in its true medium and surroundings, and assuredly with more interest and pleasure than its more favoured—and more chilly—readers who skim it listlessly as they lounge and doze in their easy-chairs by the fireside.

And yet I have written here no poem worthy of your stoicism, nor told in well-ordered verse of your heroic constancy under frost and rain and hail and shower—brave, simple, tireless toilers with fate, who, even at the faintest smile of the most capricious sky, will never hesitate to get under sail.

For like sailors you are, in your rough-weather rig, ready for the worst, firm and fearless at your stations, alert for the storm, ceaselessly calking the fragile envelope of your cargo, handling canvas and rope in the hour of tempest, and ever ready to take advantage of the first gleam of calm.

Let sweet April or hot August come, and you, hardy seamen under December inclemencies, change to Neapolitan lazzaroni—strangers to care, mere drinkers in of the sunshine ; in the golden light of the cloudless day we see you musing and languishing, lolling half asleep on the stony strata of your stalls : feet to the north, head to the south, spellbound, sipping the air, inhaling the azure, lulled by the repose of the contemplative life, intoxicated

with 'far niente,' and so blissfully happy as to give every passing idler an appetite for the siesta and such neutral joys.

Then it is that you barely deign to enter into the strife required by supply and demand; leading on the buyer in his bargaining, you are like the Heliades on the bank of the stream, caressed by the passing wind and abandoned to the sensations of the rising sap. No longer Zeno or Cato rules your mind, but at this mystic hour it is Epicurus himself, my friends, who to you lays down his laws.

I propose to make but a slight incursion into your land of independency and Bohemianism, amiable dwellers by the river Seine, for I felt that your social constitution, your manners, your physiognomy, your past life, would not attract me beyond a fugitive study; but under the frail scaffolding of your public position, I have been pleased to discover, bit by bit, so many diverse originalities, so many oddities, so many peculiarities that I have chosen to live near your encampments, distending my little book into the very respectable volume you have here.

In the course of this ethnologic voyage along your confederation, which is all frontier, I have appreciated the urbanity of your manners and the agreeableness of your occupation; to the young I have listened in all the ardour and spirit of their book-hunting theories, and to the precious memories and edifying tropology of your veterans I have paid extreme attention. I have been told of your rather too legendary intemperance, I can only testify to your Spartan sobriety at the hour of the frugal open-air repast prepared by your housekeepers.

I have seen only the deceptive frontage of your morality, but I will never consent to be convinced of error, for in your humble condition, assailed by the needs of an existence often cruel and always precarious, soaked, chilled, in as bad a plight as your wares, your weaknesses would merit absolution in virtue of the highest principles and the most indulgent theology.

Ye bookstall-keepers, my friends, receive, then, this work when it comes to you seeking shelter, aid, and protection ; it is perhaps the only opusculé that has ever been collectively dedicated to you in all equity and logic, but I do not despair of seeing my example followed by the wise when they are no longer ignorant that among you glory ever leaves its wounded. And, then, is it not to live once more, this wandering in your boxes in broad daylight beneath the more or less veiled gaiety of the sky, wearied by the wear and tear of life, cut, torn, consulted, read, taken up again, read again, useful to all, and almost proud of one's wounds ? Surely that is better than to sleep embalmed in gilded morocco, covered with interlacings in some richly glazed book-case, intact and unread, a virgin still, and respected by the boastful chastity of some bibliophilic Joseph.

Amid the phalanstery of your stalls, books exchange no dialogues of the dead : they await the last judgments of the living in a social and confraternal confusion worthy of the parables of Scripture ; they are forgiving to the eye of the loungeur, and confident in the just curiosity of the public. Come, then, my friends, give me a welcome on your quays, on your walls of solid granite where the Seine seems to rustle her glaucous robes of silk ; I shall be more at my ease lying on the bare stone of your parapets in the growing turbulence and frenzy of the great city and transient agitation of the quays than in the ebony necropolis of the wealthiest libraries.

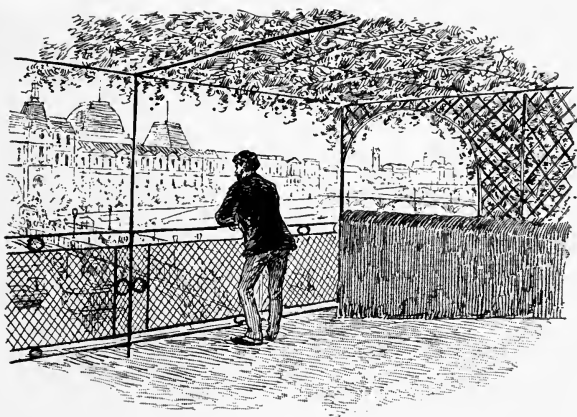
Soiled by the dust of the wind, stained by the rain, horizontally spread out at a deduction, I will give vent, as Job did, to the expression of the most beautiful humanitarian philosophy, that which shows the emptiness of all things, of the petals of the roses as of the leaves of the laurel, the vanity of effigies, of medals, of crowns, of reputations, of glory, and the utter vanity of rarity, which is oftenest but ephemeral, and dependent only on the world's folly and inconstancy.

The history of all literatures is made up of successive evolu-

tions and unexpected revolutions, and the sight of so many miles of books, written in part by defunct celebrities, is no less eloquent to our eyes, and appeals perhaps more to our understanding, than that of the plant which grows and flourishes on the half-ruined walls of ancient and mighty Byzantium.

Octave W. Green





THE BOOK-HUNTER IN PARIS

A PRELIMINARY SAUNTER.

NODIER, an illustrious and polymathic book-hunter, took upon himself some fifty years ago to prophesy the end of bibliomania, and the death of the second-hand bookseller. The old Parisian gossip thought that this great social catastrophe was one of the inevitable results of progress, and, to good Literature's mild and innocent surprise, he added that it and the second-hand bookseller would die together.

This was but the outburst of a fretful spirit ; happily

nothing dies, though everything changes, and our melancholy dealers in waste-paper, who in mouldy rags lay out for sale on the quays a few tattered books, are as worthy of interest from different points of view as the famed booksellers of the old guard whose praises all the Marcos de Saint Hilaire of legendary bibliography have so pompously sung.

Jules Janin, that ventripotent pensioner of success, accumulated, in a work entitled *Le Livre*, all the rubbish of his pilfered knowledge, and the cock-and-bull stories of his happy superficiality, and shed a few crocodile tears over the disappearance of the aged stall-keeper of the good old times. In the course of his hypocritical lamentations, the worthy J. J., translator of Horace, allowed himself to produce a sentimental portrait of the bookstall man, in the manner of Ducray-Dumesnil, which ought certainly to have found a place on some fair page of the *Musée des Familles*.

All the wrecks of the romantic period have more or less, in different ways, chanted the glory of the stall-keeper of the Restoration and the Monarchy of July; they have vaunted his merits, pictured his oddities, analyzed his tastes, displayed his astuteness, his erudition, his methods, and groaned in a minor key, in a bibliographic *de profundis*, 'Gone is the bookstall man! Gone are the twopenny boxes and the wonderful finds! Gone are the incunabula at eighteenpence, the Vérards at half a crown, and the original editions of Molière at one and a penny!

'No more on to the quays we'll go;
The laurels there have ceased to grow.'

All of which, in my opinion, is pure delusion. The generations which grow old die out, all of them, amid this twaddle concerning the pre-excellence of the past, and strum forth like old spinets the same shrill untrue com-

plaints as to the good time of their youth. *In those days !* Ah ! that is the magic formula for the man who clings to what he has lost. In the north pole of our life we delight in looking back on the warm photosphere of our youth, and feel by reflection the ardours of maturity ; all was well, all was good, all was beautiful ; and so dazzling is this parhelic mirage, so powerful is this moral heliotropism, that the mind turns away from the present and condemns it, the better to magnify the radiant visions of the past.

We hear nothing of eyes growing feeble, of ardours diminishing, of passions thinning out, of storms being no longer braved in pursuit of the truant loves of these bookish whims ; there is no confession of the fading of flowery enthusiasm, of the failing of leafy persistency, of the sap flowing less freely in gouty nodosities ; nothing is said of fashion, that mysterious leader of mind, having totally shifted the compass ; but a slash is made at the whole question, darkness is declared to be invading the world, there is now nothing but nothing, a cataclysm has come over us ; there are neither book-hunters, nor booksellers, nor books, nor literature, nor legitimate or logical zeal. Of course there are no longer the books along, all along, the river-side, the books that were sought for by our fathers and the worthy philologues of the exalted school of Charles Nodier or Gabriel Peignot. Of course there are no longer Aldines, nor Caxtons, nor Antoine Vérards, nor Simons de Colines, nor Robert Estiennes, nor Michel vas Cosans, nor Cryphiuses, nor Elzevirs in good condition, and it is only occasionally that you will come across Barbous, Constelliers, Guérins, Latours, and choice Didots ; Baskervilles, Bodonis, Brindleys, Foulises, Tonsons, and Martynses are not often to be met with ; the works that mark the richest glories of typography have had

their day on the parapets, and it would be a miracle to light upon a remarkable example of one of their ancient houses. But, then, the book-hunters have multiplied ; since the beginning of the century generations of peripatetic rummagers have succeeded each other on the bookstall ranges, and millions of travellers have loitered by the thread of water, their souls radiant with discoveries, their spirits enraptured by happy meetings in the dusty boxes.

All things pass away and all things wear out ! The books consecrated by human admiration, or by speculators attracted by their rarity, are gradually absorbed into the great libraries after a temporary vagabondage. All the veterans of renown, puffed, praised, and sometimes overrated, no longer lodge in the starlight ; that is logical, for, in the bibliophilic gospel, happy are the books which have suffered much and awaited—the kingdom of morocco which will receive them, the gold which will adorn them, the buyers who will outbid each other to have them. That is the way of the world, and thus justice is eventually done to the noble, powerful, and gentle writers of the four last centuries of our literature.

But is that any reason why the second-hand bookseller should die ? Certainly not : he lives more than ever, he expands, he extends to the east and to the west, he assumes a new skin ; he is no longer the ancient of yesterday, he is the modern of to-day, the Grand Vendor of the temple of this too productive nineteenth century, whose inventory is nearly complete, and the aurora of whose glory will not be apparent until the lapse of thirty or forty years. Amid all the lumber of the quays the bookstall-keeper of to-day has thousands of rarities which are still in the chrysalis stage of their evolution towards curiosity, and which to-morrow perhaps may bring to the light by the dawning history of the time or by the sudden eccentricity of events.

The nineteenth century will not only have to reckon with the book, but with the pamphlet, with the journal, with the handbill, and with the innumerable still-born offspring of the periodical press—of the new schools and of celebrities in embryo. Among the heaps of opuscula, the pioneers are already beginning to pick and choose, for soon the hour will strike in which romanticomania will no longer alone engross attention, and in which many forgotten or despised works will also be sought after. The quays will for a long time yet afford food for the passions, and if book-lovers no longer meet with the lucky finds of which they have so often complacently related the surprises and the wonders, they will at least supply the loungers with a few transient fancies and documentary discoveries of which our public libraries have not yet revealed the existence.

The stall-keepers' boxes, although they may be ransacked, turned topsy-turvy, and drained, so to speak, by every library bloodhound of luxury and fashion, still contain valuable curiosities which, escaping the vigilant but superficial eye of the astutest bibliopole, fail to escape the really learned man, the historian of literature, the enlightened seeker who infallibly pounces on some unique *envoi*, some precious note, of which he alone understands all the originality, and can alone estimate the incomparable value.

As to the bookstall man himself, he is still in his manner and varied type the worthy descendant of those fantastic compeers the physical and mental impression of whom the philologists of the first half of this century were so eager to reproduce for us with such a wealth of verbiage. According to their temperaments, they are the same eccentric, wrong-headed maniacs, the same good-natured philosophers, the same poor, ignorant boobies, the same humble and surprising scholars.

Along the Paris quays, from the Pont Royal even to the Pont Notre Dame, there are samples of all kinds, with their well-marked characters, their irregular gait, their incoherent assortments; they have their common customs, their brotherly feelings, and their furious rivalries. In the great bookselling monomial of the parapets on the left bank they stand elbow to elbow and strive shoulder to shoulder, helping each other, tormenting each other, forming a republic, of which the three eldest have been for some years contending for the presidency by priority of age or stage; in a word, here is a lengthy ribbon of humanity, neither better nor worse, unrolled along the very cradle of the only and true great Paris of art and history.

It is curious to remark that all this changing, wandering, and picturesque population has never possessed the special ethnology to which it is entitled. A few travellers like Fontaine de Resbecq have set out at a lively step for this land of bookstalls; but attracted by the Babel of inked paper, they have plunged their spectacles into the twopenny boxes, and, without seeing what is going on around them, have gathered from their peregrinations a sort of course of literature enough to give a headache to every grandchild of the wearisome La Harpe.

De Resbecq undertook his *Voyages littéraires sur les Quais de Paris* in 1857. He arrived at a propitious hour, amid a world still unexplored, before the invention of *Mouches*, *Guêpes*, and *Hirondelles*, in a quarter then relatively peaceable, in which he was at leisure to bring his glasses to bear with as much candour as good Monsieur Jouy, *l'Hermite*, and all the Guyanes of all the Chaussées d'Antin; he had before him a crowd of bookstall men, 'veterans of '48,' who were worthy of being sketched, for the benefit of posterity, in a few strokes of the pen. Paris had not quite finished its grand Hausmannesque

toilette, and the moment could not have been better ; but I must say, at the risk of his thinking me offensive, if he is still alive, that M. de Resbecq, who was no half-pedant, had not the slightest notion of the suggestions of the ambient air, and the grouping of men and things. He scheduled the spirit of the old books in soporific prose ; he wrote the *Provinciales* of second-hand bookselling with an arid and quite unattractive Jansenism. Never did so charming a title as he adopted cover such heavy merchandise, and this *Voyage littéraire sur les Quais de Paris* seemed to begin in a lumber-room of imperfect books, and end in an empty cellar, where the terrified reader struggles against the disquieting coma which overcomes him.

With the exception of this book, and a few others with equally misleading titles, there is not, to my knowledge, any complete monograph in the serious vein, or in the picturesque, or the pleasing, on the Paris quays and the minor bookselling world. There are articles here and there, short, instantaneous studies, scattered over the four winds of the periodical press ; but the subject as a whole and in its varied shades of detail is waiting for treatment. I have overhauled the libraries, toiled through catalogues, shaken the dust from the *Journal de la Librairie* from the year of its foundation in the palmy days of the First Empire ; I have rummaged everywhere, and even put under contribution the memories of our most amiable and aged learned men ; nothing—nothing exists concerning the quays of the capital from a book-stall point of view.

I can thus legitimately claim that mine is a book that remained to be written, and that it contains no less observation than research. The voyage was an easy one to undertake. From my lodgings I could see from the Pont Royal to the Pont des Arts—that long array of stalls

that border the Seine, and which the curiosity of the loungers is passing under review from morn to eve; this picture, that is always within my view, I have had but to give life to; I have had but to awake its historic tradition, to analyze it under its different moods, and to set forth the legends of the personages who compose it in its strange homogeneity. The task was relatively easy: interesting saunters about men and books, much gossip, miscellaneous observations, remarks and notes, mixed, infused, refined, and the work was done.

The bookstall man is naturally loquacious, the book-hunter by profession is no less so; one delights in the story of his miseries and in tittle-tattle about his neighbouring rivals, the other will talk for ever on his impressions and adventures along the parapets, which are, so to speak, arrayed with opportunities. The first, mistrustful to begin with, soon becomes familiar enough if it is a matter of talking about his neighbours; the second has as many stories in his bag as the best shot in Gascony, and, according to his own account, has by scent alone started some of the very finest hares by skilful ferretings in well-chosen corners. Hence it happens that by listening to booksellers and book-hunters one can gather not only enough for a book, but for a whole library on *Bouquinomaniana*, in which M. de Krack would have a share.

In this excursion amongst the curious I have, above all, endeavoured to make the book useful, and to restrict myself to the general physiology of the subject, as regards the scenery and *dramatis personæ*. I have chosen to be more of a Topffer than a Baedeker, more of a voyager in zigzag than a guide in the odious aridity of the word, keeping my travelling companions as clear from fog as from drought.

But all the same, this book passed through very

numerous vicissitudes before it came to the light of day. Planned towards the end of 1886, and announced for April, 1887, it was delayed from season to season for six consecutive years.

A part of the text was in type as far back as March, 1887, and the printing was going on as fast as I delivered the copy to the compositors, according to my labours of the day or night, when, owing to I know not what adventure or whim, I struck work on a certain spring morning, as the sun was making life flourish once more, and love was singing in every nest. I abandoned this book, which promised to be so successful, at an epoch when bibliophilism still prospered, and beautiful books made as many conquests as beautiful women. Three-quarters of the edition had already been subscribed, and I had every intention of resuming this physiology of the Paris quays during the forthcoming summer ; but fate, ever stronger than will, decided otherwise.

For six years I sulked in vexation over the dusty papers which contained my notes and documents ; I felt myself incapable of continuing a book for which I no longer flamed with the enthusiasm I had done in the happy days in which I had undertaken it. In a word, it seemed to me as difficult, as painful, as troublesome to bring this wreck of a book to life as to raise a boat that for a long time has been sunk in the vertiginous and discouraging depths of an ocean of oblivion.

But this unfinished volume stopped the way ; it spoilt the prospect of new plans, and rather discredited the good faith of the promises made to an important circle of amateurs and the learned. It became necessary, at whatever cost, to resume our task, and at the end of this year, 1892, with the aid of a devoted, assiduous, and unassuming friend, a valued contributor to our different reviews, M. B.-H. Gausseron — whose merit readers

know, and whose talent they appreciate—it has been possible to get a fresh start with the chariot that had stuck in the mud, and drive it along the towpath of bookstall curiosity on the Seine quays.

I must also mention in equally high terms, in this order of the day regarding the rescue, M. Gustave Boucher, *ex-Bouquiniste ès lettres*, a youthful, learned, and experienced lawyer, whose extensive information has been most useful to us, and whose notes have been no less valuable in the resumption of this book.

Since 1886, in fact, very great changes have taken place in the bookstall world, who, owing to the permanence of their boxes, the almost comfortable elegance of their installations firmly anchored to the stones of the parapets, have become tradesmen of repute, less picturesque in that they have no longer that spice of Bohemianism and independence due to their former temporary encampment.

Three of their oldest representatives have disappeared. In six years what transformations!

Be it as it may, the work, a little less homogeneous than I had dreamed, with its engravings of the past and its portraits of to-day, will, I doubt not, give satisfaction by reason of the numerous facts it contains in a form which I trust is not too pedantic or pretentious.

It will be, as far as I can see, the only work on the quays of Paris bookstalls which in a light and airy manner will sketch the men of interest of five or six generations.



HISTORIC PROLEGOMENA.

RESEARCHES REGARDING THE SECOND-HAND BOOK-
SELLERS OF THE PAST.



FNQUIRERS going back to antiquity as well equipped with erudition as with patience and leisure would find it possible to discover and describe the life of the open-air second-hand bookseller. Among the Romans we have the bookstalls beneath the rows of porticos in the vicinity of the Forum alongside those of the dealers in jewellery, pictures and amulets. Philosophers came to talk under these peridromes; authors there recited their works;

walkers there took shelter when the weather was inclement. The booksellers who came there in free competition to display their *scrinia*, which were round boxes something like those of our wafer-sellers, were assured of meeting among the passers-by with numerous customers for their second-hand cylindrical manuscripts. These were to be seen all over Rome, along the Tiber and the main streets; book-hunters assiduously frequented these cheap stalls, seeking chiefly for books received from Macedonia and every part of the Levant.

Aulus Gellius, in the fourth chapter of the ninth book of his *Attic Nights*, relates that landing at Brindisi on his return from Greece to Italy he found at a bookstall a remarkable opportunity for enriching his library without undue impoverishment of his purse.

‘I was walking,’ he says, ‘after leaving the ship at this famous port, when I noticed a bookstall. Immediately, with the eagerness of a book-lover, I ran to examine it. There was a collection of Greek books, full of fables, prodigies, strange and incredible narratives; the authors were old writers whose names are of but mediocre authority; I found there Aristæus of Proconesus, Isigonos of Nicæa, Ctesias, Onesicritus, Polystephanus, Hegesias and others. These books, much dilapidated and covered with ancient dust, looked wretched enough, but I asked the price of them. Its unexpected reasonableness led me at once to purchase them, and I carried away a great number of volumes, which I looked through during the two following nights.’

The Roman booksellers found no difficulty in finding a supply; the multiplication of books was already such that poets like Sammonicus Serenus, grammarians like Epaphroditus of Chæronea, who lived a little after the reign of Nero, were able to form private libraries of more than fifty thousand volumes. The copyists daily put

incredible quantities in circulation, and on the other hand the booty gained in the different conquests brought into the market works from all sources which almost invariably found their way to the second-hand stalls.

The taste for books was very keen ; the library became the soul of the house ; and this passion for reading is mentioned by Cicero, Cato, Pollio, Varro, Seneca and



Pliny. Bibliomaniacs by instinct or fashion swarmed in Rome, and the outdoor booksellers were as prosperous as those who kept regular shops. Enthusiasts endeavoured to collect not only manuscripts in rolls, autographic when possible, but also works on parchment or papyrus, volumes on linen, treaties or annals, writings on leather, of which mention is made by Ulpian, books of wood or tablets, the waxed polyptychs of which Pliny speaks, and

also those *Libri elephantini* which according to Turnebus were written on plates of ivory, and according to Scaliger were made of the intestines of elephants. The bibliophiles of ancient Rome found few of these books of so many varieties, except among the stall-keepers of the Tiber or the porticos, mere wandering and occasional dealers,



whose stock-in-trade contained a thousand surprises for collectors and enlightened philosophers.

After the decline of the Roman Empire the bookstall-keeper seems to have been overwhelmed by the invasions of the barbarians. Religious quarrels, civil wars, schisms, the dust of the many ruins, allow us no glimpse of the bookstall man amid the confusion of the Middle Ages; the whole system of manners and laws seems to have been opposed to his independent existence in those

troublesome times; the popularization of the written thought had ceased, only oral tradition was spread among the crowd, and it might be said that the *Trouvère* had replaced the wandering dealer in ancient literature.

The price of manuscripts, too, had become so high even for exoteric books, and the trade in them so full of danger, that it was necessary to be a royal bookseller, duly patented, to have the right to sell those marvels of



the graphic art of which the monasteries had, so to speak, the specialty.

After the invention of printing, which, as Peignot remarks, would appear to have taken as a motto the *Crescit eundo* of the sun's career, the whole face of society changed. A song of gladness welcomed this great discovery which was at last to give to all the possibility of becoming acquainted with the works of the ancients as well as of the moderns.

Jehan Molinet recorded in his writings this triumphant conquest of his century:

‘J’ai vu grand multitude
De livres imprimez,
Pour tirer en estude
Povres mal argentés
Par ces nouvelles modes
Aura maint escolier,
Décrets, Bibles et Cordes
Sans grand argent bailler.’

Printed books were very quickly spread all over Europe, and less than a century after the general adoption of



Gutenberg's methods the sage Erasmus uttered his protest against the superabundance of the issues from the press.

‘Printers,’ he wrote, ‘are filling the world with little books, which I cannot say are as useless as it has pleased me to publish, but works that are ignorant, slanderous,

defamatory, maniacal, impious and seditious; their multitude hinders any profit there might be in reading good books. Some of these books appear without a title, or, what is even more wicked, under fictitious titles. If the printer is discovered and arrested he usually replies, "If they will give me enough to keep my family I will stop printing such books."

With the profusion of books the second-hand bookseller put in an appearance about the middle of the sixteenth century. In the shops in the lanes of old Paris a large number of dealers in second-hand books established themselves. The word *bouquin* now applied to such books did not then exist, or was little used in the sense it received towards the close of the last century; it was at the time of our great trade in books with Flanders and Holland that France imported this characteristic name, which reminds one of the musty smell of goat or calf skin. The Dutch used the word *Boekin*, meaning a little book, derived from the German *Buch*, a book, which was derived in its turn from the Sanskrit *pac*, to bind or tie.

It was not, in fact, until the beginning of the seventeenth century that the Pont Neuf began to be devoted to the sale of small wares, and we are able to recognise the real ancestor of the modern stall-keeper. On this famous Pont Neuf, so well represented by Callot and described by Colletet, among beggars, mountebanks, street singers, pickpockets, idlers of quality, poets and ruffians, dealers in books and sellers of *Gazettes* had taken their places not far from the ballad-mongers. This was the true market of the printed thought; in those little shops of the Pont Neuf a brisk trade was done in pamphlets, little books, old books and new.

'This famous bridge was not content at being the most varied and gigantic of outdoor sights,' says Edouard

Fournier, in his huge historic monograph on the Pont Neuf;* 'it was the largest of reading-rooms, not only by reason of the gazettes and lampoons that were sold there, but on account of the books which were there found in multitudes, and lay on the two long parapets which stretched across the river like rows of shelves in some immense library.'

In short, the booksellers swarmed on this great bridge, the first stone of which was laid by Henry III. It was a book hospital, where the unsold of Sercy, Courbé, and Barbin (large publishers in the Galerie du Palais, near the Sainte Chapelle steps) came to piteous wreck, and implored the commiseration of the public. Boileau, in his ninth satire, speaking of the ephemeral success of certain authors of the day, describes the Pont Neuf as a Montfaucon of books banished by the retroactive justice of men :

' Vous pourriez voir un temps vos écrits estimés
Courir de main en main, par la ville semés,
Puis de là, tout poudreux, ignorés sur la terre,
Suivre chez l'épicier Neuf-Germain et la Serre,
Ou de trente feuillets, réduits peut-être à neuf,
Parer, demi-rongés, les rebords du Pont-Neuf.'

Furetière is hardly more complimentary to the bibliopolic merchandise of the parapets, when in his *Roman Bourgeois* he makes us see his pedant going on the Pont Neuf in search of the shabbiest books, with torn covers and dog's-eared leaves; 'Such books,' he adds, 'being those he believed to be of the greatest antiquity.'

Furetière is somewhat hard on his own times in this fugitive note. On the Pont Neuf in those days there must have been books which to-day would be the pride of the noblest libraries; above all, there were the

* *Histoire du Pont-Neuf*, par Edouard Fournier, Paris, Dentu, 1862, 2 vols., 12mo.

romances in the chivalric style, and about 1643 there appeared (s. l. n. d., 4^o) a ballet in eighteen figures, which had a great run under the title of *Le Libraire du Pont-Neuf, ou les Romans*. *Amadis* was therein made to dance with the *Illustre Bassa* of Scudéry, and *Don Quixote* there figured in company with the *Amants volages*. The out-



door trade in books became even exceedingly lucrative, for it evoked the jealousy of the large Paris booksellers, who, as if the privileges in which *Messieurs du Palais* rejoiced were not enough, combined to set the law in motion against the poor stall-keepers, although a decree in council dated January 30, 1619, had granted them a concession, in virtue of which they could set up stalls in

the open air from the Quai de l'Ecole at the end of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec to the Rue du Trahoir.

But, as always, the monopolists gained the day, and in 1649 there appeared an edict against the independent stall-keepers, prohibiting any person from having any portable stall, or to sell any books, principally on the Pont Neuf and its environs, on pain of punishment as common malefactors, besides the confiscation of their goods, which became the property of the first who gave information against them without further form or ceremony.

Saugrain, who mentions this first persecution of the bookstall-keepers in his *Code de la Librairie*, does not forget to mention the admirable preamble of this decree, to the effect that 'it is necessary to restore to honour the printing and book trades, and to suppress whatever tends to their debasement.'

The stall-keepers protested, and the sentence was delayed for more than a year; for, in 1650, Gui Patin wrote: 'There is an amusing lawsuit going on here among the booksellers. The syndic obtained a new decree, after about thirty others, by which it is forbidden for anyone to sell books, or expose books for sale, on the Pont Neuf. This he published, and thereupon turned out about fifty booksellers who were stationed there, who petitioned to be allowed to come back, and eventually obtained a respite for three months, during which they have to find shops.'

The poor stall-keepers were thus sacrificed at the very moment that the *Mazarinades* were being showered on Paris. Their momentary disappearance caused a good many regrets to all students and lovers of literature. A man of learning, supposed to be Baluze,* expressed himself thus in sorrow at the void left by their suppression:

* *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 2^{de} series, vol. v., p. 370.

‘Formerly,’ said he, ‘a large proportion of the stalls on the Pont Neuf were occupied by booksellers, who had very good books at moderate prices, which was a great help to men of letters, who are not generally overburdened with cash. On the stalls there could be found little treatises not often met with; others, better known, but which were not worth asking for at the bookshops, and which were only bought because they were cheap; and likewise old editions of ancient authors at reasonable



prices, and which were bought by the poor who could not afford to buy new ones.

‘And thus,’ concludes Baluze, whose judgment is in complete accord with our present ideas, ‘it seems to me that these stalls should be permitted, as much for the sake of the poor people who are in great misery, as for the benefit of the men of letters, who have always had much consideration shown them in France, and who have no longer the opportunity of obtaining books cheap.’

The stall-keepers, driven from the Pont Neuf and its environs, took to hawking books about, or met their

difficulties by renting small shops, in which they were tolerated. Nicolas de Blégny, says Abraham du Pradel, in his *Livre commode des Adresses de Paris* for 1692, gives some valuable information about the book trade at the close of the seventeenth century, and enables us to see the Quais as then peopled by bookstall-keepers and dealers in Chinese wares, porcelain, glass, shells, and other curiosities and jewellery. An assortment of curious works was then to be found at the Sieur Jourbert's, Quai des Augustins; at the Widow Nion's, Quai de Nesles, where began the famous dynasty of Didot; at *La Bible d'or*; the finest *Heures* were sold by the Sieurs Poirion and Vaugon, on the Pont au Change, and also on the Quai de Gesores; ordinary almanacs, printed at Troyes, were sold by the Sieur Rafflé, Rue du Petit Pont; finally, library books and old books and rare manuscripts generally were to be had in plenty in the Rue de la Vieille Boucherie and on the Quai des Augustins.

The rigour of the decree directed against the stall-keepers was gradually relaxed, and about 1670 many stalls reappeared on the Pont Neuf and on the primitive parapets of the Seine, without any severity being exercised against the delinquents. Mademoiselle Chéron, one of the heroines of the *Parnasse des Dames*, and who was poet, painter, musician, and engraver all at one time, brought out a little poem in three cantos, *Les Cerises renversées*, a trifle of little value, but which enables us to discover the bookstall-keeper encamped, as we know him, on the banks of the charming river, dear to the sheep of Madame Deshoulières. The quotation will be long, but it is not easy to condense such a gossiping piece of work, and we need not give the whole of it.

In the third canto of *Cerises renversées* Damon is arranging for the payment of the damage caused by two ladies, whose carriage has upset a load of cherries, when

a pickpocket adroitly relieves him of his purse. The people, satisfied at this feat, set free the carriage they had stopped and surround Damon, who, finding his pocket empty, confused at his discomfiture, and seeing himself exposed to the anger of the mob, who are hustling on to him, tries to get clear by thrashing out with his cane.

‘ Il se bat en retraite, et gagnant le terrain,
Minerve à reculons le conduit par la main.
Il attrape le Quai : là, réside un Libraire,
Des nouveautés du temps riche dépositaire ;
Ou y voit chaque jour, sur les bords étalés,
De maint et maint Auteur les titres empoulés.
C’est là que, s’arrêtant d’une guerrière audace,
Damon aux plus hardis fait deserter la place ;
La déesse l’anime en ce pressant besoin,
Guide ses coups, les pousse et de près et de loin.
Tel, assailli des chiens, lassé, mis hors d’haleine,
Est un fier sanglier acculé contre un chêne,
Qui, rappelant sa force en ce dernier combat,
A grands coups de défense atteint, déchire, abat ;
Ainsi combat Damon, quand la fonte imprudente
Renverse, en se poussant, la boutique savante.
Deux cents volumes neufs, en un tas ramassés,
Du parapet dans l’eau se trouvent dispersés ;
Vieux et nouveaux, tout tombe, et le triste libraire
Voit voltiger en l’air sur dernier exemplaire.

O fortune ennemie ! où me vois-je réduit !
Jour malheureux, dit-il, plutôt funeste nuit !
O mes galants auteurs abimés dans la Seine,
Ecoutez mes regrets, venez finir ma peine !
Auteurs qui du bon sens renfermiez les trésors ;
Qui, sortant du Palais, veniez parer nos bords,
Pourquoi, précipités jusques au fond de l’onde,
N’êtes vous pas témoins de ma douleur profonde !
Quel magique pouvoir dans le siècle à venir
De vos noms oubliés fera ressouvenir ?

Thus does the unfortunate bookseller lament when

Mercury, who is book-hunting, doubtless for something to amuse Jupiter, hears his complaint, and before starting for Olympus, experiences the pleasure of philosophically consoling the afflicted bibliopole.

‘ Le marchand l’aperçoit : “ Favorable Mercure,
Equitable témoin de ma triste aventure,
Cria-t-il, tu me vois accablé de douleur ;
Si jamais des marchands tu fus le protecteur,
Sois aujourd’hui sensible au coup qui me désole.”
Mercure, gravement, prend alors la parole :
“ Je sais quelle est ta perte et j’en ai du regret,
Mais au sort ennemi c’est l’injuste décret ;
Ces chefs-d’œuvre galants dont tu pleures l’absence
Périssent presque tous au point de leur naissance !
Avortons, malheureux, dont le brillant destin,
Comme aux plus belles fleurs, ne dure qu’un matin.
Va donc, sans frapper l’air de tes plaintes funestes,
De tes auteurs noyés pêcher les tristes restes.
Descends. Mais qu’aperçois-je ? O prodige nouveau !
J’en revois quelques-uns qui reviennent sur l’eau,
Le nombre en est petit ; vois-tu comme à la nage
Au favorable vent les repousse au rivage ?
Le reste sous les flots demeure enseveli,
Et justement mérite un éternel oubli.
Mais ne t’afflige point d’une perte légère ;
Les bons sont échappés j’y fais mettre l’enchère ;
Même avant que la lune ait montré son croissant,
Un seul pour le profit t’en vaudra plus de cent.’

This poetic fragment abundantly proves that the book-stall-keepers displayed in the open air, about 1670, quite a cargo of ancient and modern works, and had their stalls on the banks of the Seine, at the Quai de l’Ecole, Quai de Nesles, Quai des Augustins, or Quai *Mal à Quay*. The stalls were primitive enough ; the books were laid out on planks resting on trestles ; and the stall-keeper was bold enough to attack the passer-by by a special cry proclaiming the extreme cheapness of his wares.

Books were already so numerous that it was only

reasonable for them to overflow into the streets or crossings, or into the Seine. According to contemporaries, it would have been impossible to read all that was printed, even, they added, if the reader were built on the plan that Mahomet gave to the inhabitants of his paradise, where every man had 70,000 heads, every head had 70,000 mouths and eyes, and every mouth had 70,000 tongues, speaking 70,000 different languages. But in this heap of different books, what prizes there then were in specimens of early printing—Aldines and Elzevirs, the whole value of which only the eighteenth century could appreciate.

In a week's walk on the quays and the neighbouring streets the enlightened book-hunter could for five hundred jingling shillings secure a collection of the rarest works which in these days of high prices would not change hands for as many sovereigns.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the second-hand bookseller inundated Paris; everywhere, on the quays, on the bridges, at all the cross roads, he had his temporary shop. Georg Wallin, the Swede, in a passage in his *Lutetia Parisiorum erudita*,* an account, in Latin, of his stay in Paris in 1721 and 1722, has given us a few curious pages for the history of the trade in books under the Regency of Philippe d'Orleans, which freely rendered run as follows: 'Regarding those booksellers whom I will call *minorum gentium* (as it was the custom at Rome to call the patrician families not dating from the origin of the republic), that is to say those who sold books more of the past than the present, under temporary shelters on all the quays of the Seine, and in all the squares and open spaces, I do not speak, and their number I cannot

* *Lutetia Parisiorum erudita sui temporis, hoc est annorum hujus sæculi xxi. et xxii., auctor: G. W. S. (Georgio Wallino Sueco). Norimbergæ, anno MDCCXXII. 12mo.*

estimate. I say nothing of the amateur booksellers (*privatos bibliopolas*) who trade not in public but at their own houses. When I arrived in Paris there was yet another kind of bookseller quite as attractive and also never in want of customers. On tables, on planks, placed in the street, were displayed books of all kinds, and the vendor in a loud voice invited the bystanders to look at them and buy them. I have still ringing in my ears the words which I so often heard on every side of me: *Bon*



marché ! Quatre sols, cinq sols la pièce ! Allons ! vite ! toutes sortes de livres curieux ! I was astonished that they could sell at so low a price, books which were often very rare and in good condition (*variores et elegantes*), but I soon learnt the reasons: first, this sort of bookseller has no knowledge of books; second, they are satisfied with a small profit, and without further notice they sell cheap what they have bought cheap; for in Paris the libraries of people who die are not always sold by public auction as is done in other towns; but books are to a certain extent sold by the yard to those who will take them

away. A short time afterwards, however, these sales were forbidden by the authorities, on account of the abuses to which they gave rise, the other book-shops complaining that they had no customers (*quærentium solitudinem ante ostium*).'

Wallin was correctly informed, for we have found under date October 20, 1721, a decree of his Majesty, prohibiting the sale of books on stalls on pain of confiscation, fine and imprisonment. We by chance lighted upon this curious original document at a bookstall in the Près-Saint-Gervais, and we give it here complete.

'His Majesty being informed that the abuse of the freedom in the printing and production of books has attained such dimensions that all sorts of writings, on religion, on the government of the State, and against the purity of morals, printed in foreign countries, or clandestinely, in certain towns of his kingdom, are introduced by indirect and secret channels into his good town of Paris and there distributed by people of doubtful reputation, who hawk them round to private houses, in the inns, the taverns, the coffee-houses and even in the streets, where they are sold on the bookstalls on the bridges, quays, parapets, cross-roads and public places, and who for the better concealment of their evil practices pretend to furnish these stalls with other books old or new, most of them sold and stolen by children and servants and received by the stall-keepers, who well know them to be stolen; and that this abuse, alike prohibited by the orders and regulations already issued regarding the trade in books and printing in general, has made such progress that the persons appointed to watch over it are unable to arrest it or to put in force the powers that have been entrusted to them without danger to their life by the rebellion and violence of these people, who are supported by the day labourers on the quays and others of the

populace. For which it being necessary to provide, his Majesty, on the advice of Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, Regent, hereby positively prohibits all persons from introducing into this town of Paris, by surreptitious channels, and contrary to the tenor of the regulations established for the admission of books, any printed matter whatsoever under pain of the aforesaid regulations. All persons, including booksellers and printers, are prohibited from opening any bookstall or portable bookshop on the bridges, quays, parapets, cross-roads, public



squares, and other places in this town of Paris, even in the royal and privileged houses, in any manner and on any pretext whatsoever, on pain of a fine of one thousand livres, confiscation and imprisonment, and even of exemplary punishment should the case so require; and to all freeholders, leaseholders, hall porters and others having sites to let for the warehousing, storing, or otherwise of bookstalls, or permitting them to be received into their houses a pain of

similar penalties and of answering in their own name and at their own cost for the resultant damages according to the nature of the books and the requirements of the case.

‘ His Majesty hereby prohibits all persons of whatever rank or condition from giving assistance to the said stall-keepers in resisting the officers of police and others charged with the discovery of the said stalls on peril of being punished as rebels and disturbers of the public order.

‘His Majesty also prohibits all soldiers and others of every station from carrying for sale and distribution books or printed matter of any description in private houses, inns, taverns, coffee-houses and in the streets on pain of imprisonment, confiscation, fines and other severer penalties; and he also prohibits all innkeepers, tavern keepers and coffee-sellers from exposing, distributing or selling any of the said books or pamphlets in their houses and shops on pain of having to answer for the same on their own responsibility, of the withdrawal of their freedom and other penalties according to the exigency of the case.

‘Booksellers and printers are also prohibited from having in their shops or stores anything exceeding the limits prescribed by the regulations, as also from exposing for sale or dealing in any books on Sundays and Festivals on pain of confiscation and fine.

‘His Majesty hereby commands the *Sieur de Baudry*, Master of Requests, and Lieutenant-General of Police, to attend to the due execution of this order, which is to be published and posted up wherever necessary, so that no person shall be ignorant of it.

‘Done at Paris, the twentieth of October, one thousand seven hundred and twenty-one. (Signed) *LOUIS*, and countersigned *PHÉLYPEAUX*.’

The above ordinance, entrusted to the presses of *Jean de la Caille*, printer to the police, was read and published in a loud and intelligible voice to the sound of the trumpet and by the public crier, in all ordinary and accustomed places, by *Jean Lemoine*, officer of the *Châtelet* of Paris, and Crier appointed for the Town, Provostship and Viscounty of Paris, and it was duly



posted the said day in the said places. The poor stall-keepers, again persecuted, had to retire into the shade and seek with caution for means, selling their goods clandestinely. The Parisians were indignant in their jeering way; there were songs, there were pamphlets, but the shops had to be shut all the same. In one of these *Requestes* in verse there is an account, in the simple-minded manner of Loret, of the hard and desperate life of the unfortunate stall-keepers, so unjustly attacked by this royal edict :

‘ Ces pauvres gens, chaque matin,
Sur l'espoir d'un petit butin,
Avecque toute leur famille ;
Garçons apprentis, femme et fille
Chargeant leur col et plein leurs bras
D'un scientifique fatras,
Venoient dresser un étalage
Qui rendoit plus beau le passage
Au grand bien de tout reposant,
Et homeur dudit exposant ;
Qui, tous les jours, dessus ses hanches,
Excepté fêtes et dimanches,
Temps de vacance à tout trafic,
Faisoit débiter au public
Deurée à produire doctrine
Dans la substance cérébrine.’

This proscription of the Parisian stall-keepers remained undoubtedly without much effect, for during the reign of Louis, *le Bien-aimé*, many new ordinances, couched in almost identical terms, were posted and cried in the four corners of the town. About 1756 decrees, ordinances, and police regulations had multiplied almost without limit. We have in front of us an unauthorized collection of forty-seven papers in quarto, bearing on the suppression and demolition of the shops and stalls in the *Marché aux Poirées*, the *Quai des Augustins*, and the

temporary shops of the Pont Neuf. All of them mention the sellers of books new and second-hand, and leave no doubt as to the invasion of the banks of the Seine by the stall-keepers, at least as regards the vicinity of the Pont Neuf.

In these decrees prohibition is declared against the dealers occupying temporary shops, erected and dismantled every day for the sale of books or images, under the curious pretext of excessive liberty and abuse.

At the same time it is only fair to add that the astute stall-keeper indulged in all the supplenesses of an eel, and practised the most artful devices for evading the edicts by which he was pursued.

Attacked by a series of terrible decrees and unjustifiable ordinances under Louis after Louis, four in succession, he might well feel discouraged, and inclined to abandon his thankless trade; but like a true child of Paris, he made the best of it, and in spite of the thunders of their majesties' officials, the stall-keeper slipped away, only to return to the water, to flourish on the bank of the river, or on the parapets of its bridges.

The quays on the left bank were then crowded and gay, the best society there met, at least in the part facing the Louvre and the Tuileries. The Quai des Theatins (now the Quai Voltaire) offered to the admiration of strangers the monastery and church of the good fathers, as well as the two hôtels de Mailly, the gardens and terrace of which occupied the whole space between the Rue des Bac and the Rue de Beaune; the Hôtel de Morstin, built at the corner of the Rue des Saints-Pères, by the Florentine Falain, marked no less sumptuously the beginning of the Quai Malaquais, where people could still admire those two superb buildings, the Hôtel de Bouillon, adorned by the pencil of Lebrun, and

that of Queen Margaret, which after 1718 became the Hôtel Gilbert de Voisin.*

These two quays were then the favourite promenade of the ladies of quality, who met there in the afternoon to display their rouge, their petticoats, their patches, their Chinese fans, and the little lackeys who carried their trains. In threading the serried ranks of these fair pedestrians, among whom glided a few milliners and



more than one lady of the opera, the emblazoned Quai des Quatre Nations was reached, and then the Quai de Conti, which bordered the whole length of the hôtel of that name, and the Hôtel de la Roche-sur-Yon. It was in this Hôtel Conti, then the Hôtel Guénégaud, that Molière lived, at this very spot where in 1771 stood the Hôtel des Monnaies.

The stall-keepers then abounded in these parts, and it

* See *Les Rues de Paris*, Paris ancient and modern (1844), the article by Mary Lafon on the Quays, vol. i., pp. 293, 316.

was the correct thing for the kindly loungers to gossip around the bookstalls, and exchange their choicest witticisms on the taste of the times and the petty literature then in fashion. At all hours of the day this neighbourhood was much frequented—above all, by men of letters, lawyers of the Basoche, and foreigners. There is one historic fact sufficiently unknown to be worth mention by us, for it shows that not only did the booksellers and stall-keepers contribute to attract literary society to the environs of the Hôtel Mazarin, but that there existed a meeting-place, doing a good trade in French and English journals.

This was at the angle of the Rue Dauphine and the Quai Conti, where stood the first establishment known in Paris under the name of *Café Anglais*. Painted in large letters on the signboard appeared the words, *Café Anglais. Béchet, Propriétaire.*

This was the meeting-place of most of the English writers visiting Paris to make the acquaintance of the literary men of the period, the encyclopædists, and the Court poets of Louis XV. About 1769 it provided for its patrons the best of the British newspapers, such as the *Westminster Gazette*, the *London Evening Post*, the *Daily Advertiser*, and the various pamphlets published on the other side of the Channel.

More of a literary club than a shop for the sale of lemonade and coffee, it was managed by Béchet, the chief of a dynasty of booksellers, which lasted on till almost our own days on the Quai des Augustins and in the streets about the Sorbonne.

It should be remembered that the Quai Conti was, up till 1769, but a very narrow passage leading down to a watering-place for horses. Between the Pont Neuf and the building known as the Château Gaillard, which stood at the opening of the Rue Guénégaud, there were a few shops, where a perpetual little fair was held.

This Château Gaillard, which was a dependency of the old Porte de Nesle, had been granted by Francis I. to Benvenuto Cellini. The illustrious Florentine jeweller there received the visits of the royal patron of the arts, and executed under his Majesty's eyes the works the King had ordered of him.

This Café Anglais, kept by Béchét, sufficiently explains how the Quartier Conti came to be so fashionable among the islanders at the end of the last century. It will be remembered that Sterne in his delightful *Sentimental Journey* arrived in 1767 at the Hôtel de Modène, in the Rue Jacob, opposite the Rue des Deux Angés; and we have not forgotten his love for the quays, and the adventure which occurred to him when talking to a bookseller on the Quai Conti, from whom he sought to obtain a copy of Shakespeare, in order that he might again read the advice of Polonius to his son on travel. In this chapter of Sterne there is a charming scene giving the most curious picture of a book-lover and a bookseller that we have for more than a century. The adventure of the pretty chambermaid come to buy *Les Égaréments du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, and which happened to the English humorist, tenderly smitten, is not to be despised as a recollection bearing on our subject. It was the custom of men of wit, as Fournier observes, to spend their leisure hours in the book-shops. They went to Quillan's reading-room in the Rue Christine; but they more generally went to the Rue Saint-Louis-au-Palais, near the Pont Neuf, to visit Desauge, senior, who by agreement with the police had retained the sole right of selling prohibited erotic books.

Diderot, in his *Salon* of 1761, relates how he knew, when he was twenty years old, the wife of Greuze, then a girl in a small book-shop.

'I used to like her,' he said, 'when I was young and

she was called Mademoiselle Babuti. She kept a little book-shop on the Quai des Augustins—a smart young woman, white and upright as the lily, red as the rose. I entered in that brisk, excited way I had, and said :

““ Mademoiselle, *Les Contes de La Fontaine*—a *Petronius*, if you please.”

““ There they are, sir. Do you want any other books ?”

““ I beg your pardon, mademoiselle, but——”

““ Say what it is.”

““ *La Religieuse en Chemise*.”

““ Oh fie, sir ! Do you read rubbish like that ?”

““ Ah, ah ! Is it rubbish, mademoiselle ? I was not aware of that ;” and next time I passed I smiled and so did she.’

Restif de la Bretonne, in his *Contemporaines*, has no more than Diderot omitted to mention his flirtations with some of these bookstall girls, and wrote a long chapter on the fair bookseller and the pretty stationer, in which there is certainly no want of facts, but we leave them to the curious.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the merry times of the quays and of the Quartier Dauphine. The street amusements then provided for the Parisians on the Pont Neuf, the Place Dauphine, the Place de l’Estrapade, and at Saint Laurent, have long disappeared from the centre of the town, and have been relegated to its ends. Mountebanks, strong men, jugglers, ballad-singers, sellers of gingerbread, etc., were to be found before 1870 at the cross-roads near the Observatory, round about the Pont d’Austerlitz, on the left bank and on the right bank of the Seine and in the Place du Trône. Since then they have all gone.

While on this subject, there recurs to our memory a

motto which figured in the seventeenth century on the placard of a tooth-drawer named Carmeline, established on the Pont Neuf opposite the Place Dauphine. Amid molars and canines newly extracted and threaded like beads on a necklace, there was to be read: *Uná avulsá. non deficit altera* (One tooth drawn, there is no want of others).

This motto, taken from Virgil, and amusingly travestied for the occasion, proved a great success for the charlatan.

With regard to charlatan, an expression often used and applied to others than the industrials of the Pont Neuf, who knows its origin? It is one of the strangest.

Alongside the tooth-drawer of the Place Dauphine just mentioned there was a stall on trestles occupied by a dealer in drugs of all sorts and in powders of all virtues. His sign ran: *Il signor*

Desiderio Descomba, pregratissimo medico di Milano. He wore a cloak or tunic of scarlet, in Italian *scarlattino*, *scarlatano*, whence comes the word charlatan.

Yet another curious etymology: that of *orviétan*, which we owe to another charlatan of the old Pont Neuf.

Signor Hieronimo de Ferranti, born at Orvieto, a town in Italy, in the province of Viterbo, opened a shop for ointments in Paris, at the foot of the Pont Neuf, at the angle of the Rue Dauphine, where there is now a refreshment-room. The shop of the signor from



Orvieto had a sun for a sign. He sold an electuary which had all the virtues imaginable and cured every disease. On a panel in the shop were frames of letters certifying that the unequalled remedy had cured all the most mighty sovereigns of Africa, a country little known in those days.

All Paris ran to the *Sun*. The electuary took the name of *orviétan*, and round the shop of the Italian charlatan crowded strangers from all parts of Europe to purchase the specific, which, according to the testimonials, triumphed over all ills, past, present, and future.

The word *orviétan* remained to denote anything valueless, and every cheat dealing in pompous expressions was dubbed *marchand d'orviétan*.

We cannot pass in silence, now we have mentioned the charlatans of the seventeenth century, the famous Baron de Gratelard, the great vendor of ointment on the same Pont Neuf. In his repertory were the most amusing facetiæ. The public in their anxiety to see him and hear him actually fought with fists to get near his trestles. A book was printed about him, *Les Entretiens familiers du sieur baron de Gratelard, disciple de Verboquet*.

But this digression may be over-long; let us return to the *bouquinistes* of the quays. In the eighteenth century this word *bouquiniste*, of German, or, rather, Dutch origin, was used in the double sense of bookseller and book-hunter. 'He is called a Bouquiniste,' says Sebastien Mercier, 'who pries into every corner in Paris to unearth old books and rare works, and who sells them. He first visits the quays, the small shops, and every place where pamphlets are displayed for sale. He turns over the piles that lie on the ground and seizes upon the most dusty volumes and those which have an antique look about them.'

Mercier does not speak of the *bouquiniste* in the

second sense, and you have to run carefully through his *Tableau de Paris* as far as the chapter headed *Revendeurs de livres* before finding the curious passage which follows :

‘There is certainly ten times more reading in Paris now than there was a century ago, if one considers this multitude of small libraries, which, entrenched in the shops at the corners of the streets, and sometimes in the open air, deal in old second-hand books or in the new pamphlets which succeed each other without interruption. These dealers often sell newly prohibited works, but they are careful not to display them ; they show them to you behind the shelves of their shop ; these monkey tricks mean a few sous more to them, and they make their money in every way on all possible novelties sacred and profane. Diplomacy, banking, the dispute about the deficit, the war with the Turks and Imperialists, the lives of the Popes or the hermits, all come to their net ; they take out the first page, disfigure the title, not caring to mention it, and sell the works of genius as they would sell a piece of cheese.’

Is not that a beautiful expression ? But Mercier, a little further on, does better :

‘The dealers go to the inventories, buy without knowing them the books they never read, knocking the dust out of them and laying them out for sale. The buyer as he passes interrupts his march, and before deciding reads a few pages ; another interested in his reading reads the book standing, and would go on to the end of it, if the dealer did not rouse him out of his enchantment.

‘Romances, travels, and a few books of devotion, are bought more than others—poetry is down in the world, and prose of all kinds sells better than verse, which is read no longer.’ (Is it ever read in a crowd ?)

‘Among these dealers, stationed in the passages of the public promenades,’ says Mercier further, as if to show us that nothing changes, ‘are a few spies who serve two objects: to recognise the people whose descriptions have been given, or to denounce those who bring them some illicit pamphlet, or those who, with too apparent an appetite, ask for one of those books which more often than not have imaginary titles.’

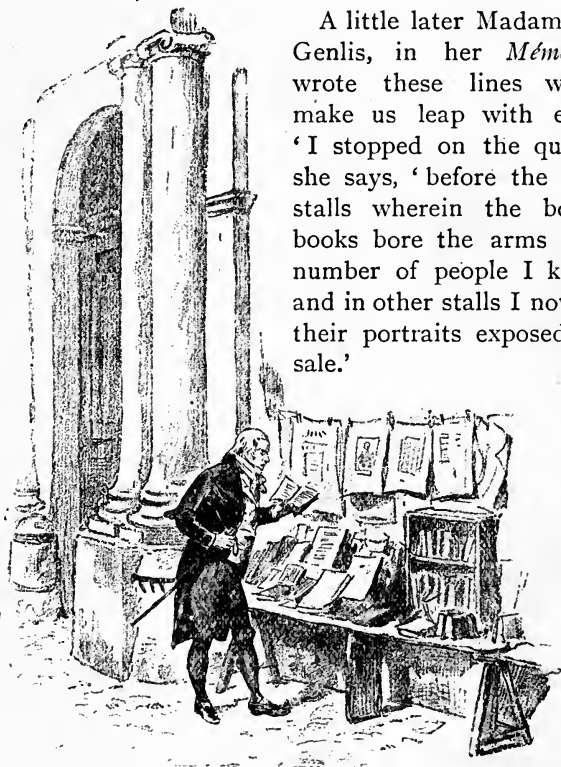
Mercier only speaks incidentally of the quays, but he shows that books were in abundance on the left bank either in shops or on stalls in the open air. On the Pont Neuf, in the little pavilions built on the half-moons of the pillars in 1775, and which were not completely demolished until 1853, bookstall-keepers were in the majority. In the *Almanach de la Samaritaine* which appeared in 1787 we find: ‘La Samaritaine is a judge of books, so many have been sold on the parapet close by. She thinks she may say that folios will continue to be at a discount, and that 16mos will have a wonderful run. They move off easily, and, what is better, they are easily lost.’

A curious satire, which again tends to prove that the horror of large sizes is not quite special to our times, and is not only due, as it is said, to the limited accommodation of our lodgings.

Under the Revolution the stall-keepers knew days of liberty, and even of license, for, according to Meister, in the year V, the capital of the world had at that time the appearance of Rag-fair. But what opportunities collectors then had! Riches then changed hands by the cartload, and in the scattered boxes on the parapets lay admirable volumes wearied of magnificence, wide-margined Elzevirs sumptuously bound in old red morocco, superb editions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries bound by Ève and Le Gascon, grand folios descriptive of the festivals in the preceding reign, their leather vestments covered with

iron shields and royal arms, all faded in the sun, softened in the rain and soiled by the dust! What an uprising! Brother bibliophiles, would we had been there, like Saint Vincent de Paul, to receive and restore the disinherited!

A little later Madame de Genlis, in her *Mémoires*, wrote these lines which make us leap with envy. 'I stopped on the quays,' she says, 'before the little stalls wherein the bound books bore the arms of a number of people I knew, and in other stalls I noticed their portraits exposed for sale.'



In the *Fragments sur Paris* of Jean Laurent Meyer, translated from the German by General Dumouriez and published at Hamburg in 1798, we meet with this note: 'The Quai de Voltaire resembles a gallery of engravings. The dealers have covered all the walls of the houses.

You will find there excellent examples ancient and modern, but also much rubbish—the innumerable prints which have appeared during the Revolution, and which, having had their day, have disappeared. I have seen but one bad print representing the attack on the Thuilleries of the 10th of August. I have sought in vain for many others, such as the portraits of men become famous through the Revolution; Fresinger's collection of the members of the Constituent Assembly is no longer to be found, that excellent artist having gone to England. The dealers have themselves burnt their collections for fear of being accused and arrested under the reign of Robespierre. The celebrated engraver Alix has destroyed during this very time of terror and weakness most of his best engravings, especially his portraits of famous men, for there has been a search made in the houses of the artists to charge them as suspects; it was not until after the 9th Thermidor that he dared to enrich his fine series of illuminated portraits of great men with those of Mirabeau, Bailly, and Lavoisier.'

It was a good time all the same, as the historian of the Pont Neuf wrote—a good time for the bookstall-keeper, above all. One of them who afterwards became a rich bookseller, and whose trumpery stock was then drying on the Quai des Augustins, having learnt that on the 5th Germinal of the year VI. all the books of theology and devotion were to be taken from the Château de Sceaux to the Arsenal, to be transformed into cartridges and cartridge-pouch linings, ran to the place of massacre, and found means to arrive at an understanding with the carrier, and exchange the marvels of the Duchesse du Maine for old books of no value. The beautiful books of the Château de Sceaux, exported by this intelligent bookseller to England, brought him in quite a little fortune. In chapter ccxxi. of his *Paris pendant la Révolution*, Citizen

Mercier reports the invasion of the stalls and their keepers. 'One of the most striking things in the town,' he says, 'is the sight of the quays, bridges, open spaces and public places, the corners of the streets, and even the whole length of the streets, obstructed by portable stalls and booths—there are even grocery shops on the pavement. The borders of the quays are covered with books ;



there are even more book-stalls than cake-stalls. People must be reading prodigiously, for everywhere there is nothing but books. There are libraries on wheels, which are run off when it rains, and return when the sun reappears. On every side you turn you see the permanent fair of France in which the actors are thrust into the smallest possible hole. The secret has been discovered of cramming the greatest number of stalls into the

least possible space. Even the walls have been dug into, and some of the streets of Paris are like a honeycomb in which a solution is found for this problem by mercantile mechanism.'

Notwithstanding this extreme liberty given to the small dealers and the bookstall-keepers, the trade in books during the Revolution, the Directory, and the Consulate did not flourish as might be supposed. In the course of our rummaging strolls we chanced, at a rag-dealer's, on a curious manuscript evidently written for the press, and which appears to us to have been composed by some discontented bookseller about the year VIII. or IX. It is a

Mémoire pour le corps de la librairie, contre au moins trois cents particuliers vendeurs, brocanteurs, recelleurs et étalleurs de livres. It is particularly characteristic, but unfortunately unfinished. It consists of but four pages and a half in quarto, and thus begins :

‘The deplorable state and grievous situation in which the book trade now is, compels its members to have recourse to the chief magistrates to stop the unbridled license of a crowd of people of all conditions who have come into this Profession (a name given with regret to a science which includes all the others) of dealers in books (not booksellers) of all kinds in the most beautiful town in Europe.

‘Books almost unique, fallen into the hands of these dealers, have been, for want of knowledge, sold to the buttermen, in such a way that the learned and, what is more, public libraries have been deprived of them.

‘What annoyance it is to see books mixed on the Pont Neuf with melons—a man leaves the service for which he is fitted to sell books, a woman to seek an Elzevir Virgil in a pile of shallots that are sold by the litron.

‘The pillars of the Halles, who would have believed it ? That old-clothes store for every kind of rubbish is heaped up on Sundays and holidays with books ; I leave you to judge where they come from.

‘Who would have believed that you can buy books in baskets slung on to a horse, as you can buy cheese ? And yet that can be seen any day in the streets of Paris.

‘Who would believe that a servant can steal his master’s books and then expose them openly for sale at a stall ? And yet that is what can be done owing to the abused tolerance of the bookstalls.

‘Twelve or fifteen years ago the book auctions served as daily academies ; there private gentlemen, learned men,

and the booksellers, were accustomed to meet in assemblies agreeable for society and profitable for the heirs. To-day these meetings have changed ; they are attended by hucksters, second-hand brokers, lackeys, stall-keepers, and a crowd of people with neither house nor home, whose name or address is rarely known, who seize upon the goods in such a way that neither private buyers nor the booksellers can get near them ; nay, more, by act and deed they maltreat our widows, however aged they may be.'

This pretty picture of the black gang of the stall-keepers of the days gone by is in this paper developed at considerable length, and, as can be seen, there is nothing attractive about it. In the name of his colleagues, the booksellers in the shops, the author of the document demands aid and protection from the Government ; he demands privileges, and he rises in indignation against the priests and monks who trade in books—although they are prohibited from doing so by the sacred canons, which enjoin them to 'employ their time in converting themselves by converting others.'

We have quoted but a few extracts from this curious memorandum to show how low the bookseller had fallen. On all sides we hear of this collapse, and J. B. Pujoult, in his *Paris à la Fin du XVIII^e Siècle*, affords us another proof.

'Never,' he says, 'had science or literature been so cheap ; the poor people read much, the rich would not or could not read.

"A sou apiece ! two sous apiece !" was the most frequent cry on the Boulevard Montmartre and the Quai du Louvre ; but what do you think the dealer was selling ? Cakes ? No, books !

'Do you see that dusty heap ? that is the rubbish of some fundholder's library ; that cartload of books, in

block, was not sold at more than a farthing a volume. Run over with me the titles of the volumes; what a medley! Here is a book of devotion and the *Contes de La Fontaine*, here are the works of Nicolle under a pamphlet of Voltaire's, farther on is a panegyric on Saint Louis in the same binding as the *Révolutions de Paris*.

'But,' continues Pujoult, 'that which swarmed and formed the bulk of the stall-keeper's stock was the private memoir. Read: *Mémoires militaires de l'Abbé Millot*, *Mémoires de la Vieuville*, *Mémoires de Feuquières*, *Mémoires d'Etat de Villeroi*, *Mémoires du Cardinal de Richelieu*. At one halfpenny, one halfpenny a volume! *Mémoires de Sully*, at two halfpennies! Ah! those I will take away with me!'

'Be calm, ye indignant shades, if your names no longer make the fortune of the bookseller, even if they ruin him; know that for more than six months all the grocers, fruiterers, and other tradesmen in my district have been wrapping up the things they sell in entire sheets of the *Lettres de Voltaire*, good type, good paper. That is the positive fact. Yes, I came to read this collection solely because I am fond of Gruyère cheese and cherries.'

This terrible clearing out of books at less than waste-paper prices was quite natural at the outbreak of the Revolution and during the first wars of the Republic; the market became overloaded for so many obvious reasons that it does not seem urgent to detail them here; by consulting Werdet's *Histoire de la Librairie Française*, it will be seen how books gradually returned to honour under the Empire and the Restoration. Bonaparte, in giving a general impulse to all industries, raised the poor stall-keepers out of the mud, and under the geometric glance of the conqueror of Italy and Egypt the banks of the Seine were made straight and clothed more regularly

in a solid and useful rampart of stones admirably adapted for our friends the stall-keepers.

This would be the moment, if the fancy took us to be precise, to speak of the garret of Bonaparte on the Quai



Conti, and show the young lieutenant going and coming along the quays, his brow thoughtful, eagerly searching among the boxes for books on algebra, history, and geography; but this legend of the garret of the Quai Conti at No. 5, in the angle of the Ruelle de Nevers, a yard or so from the *Petit Dunkerque*, no longer exists now that M. Auguste Vitu, in a very interesting work, has clearly established that the statement that Bonaparte lived in this house is as false in fact as in form.

Do not insist on it, then, and do not repeat with Edouard Fournier the version which represents Napo-

leon taking Marie-Louise to the surroundings of the Pont Neuf to show her with emotion the room in which, solitary and ambitious, he lived poorly after leaving the Military School, feverishly awaiting an opportunity for distinguishing himself.

Under the Empire and under the Restoration the history of the stall-keepers on the banks of the Seine would be worth a pause if we could only be sure of limiting our gossip on the subject; but already documents

are multiplying under our eyes, recollections abound in our memory, evoking so much reading on this important subject; Barba, Nodier, Peignot, Pixérécourt, Didot, Werdet, Paul Lacroix, Hugo even, have spoken so excellently of the excellent stall-keepers of the first half of this century, of their physiognomy and of the admirable finds they made in their portable stalls, that it would be folly to pretend to summarize all that.

The representative which dominates all others, the glory of the dealers of the quays, was Achaintre, the very learned Latin scholar, who about 1811, on the parapets facing the Institute, sold books which he often took the trouble to note. M. de Fontaine, then head-master of the University, thought of placing this needy, tattered Latinist in some library where he could work sheltered from the weather; but the good fellow was deaf, he had none of the gifts of the beggar and the courtier, he was forgotten, and died at his post at an advanced age.

M. Victor Fournel, under the pseudonym of Henry Bruneel, in the *Magasin pittoresque*, published some forty years ago a graphic sketch which brings on the scene the worthy Achaintre and a student. The student, on the quays, asks him, without knowing who he is, for some information regarding an edition of Juvenal which the admirable Latinist had just published. 'But I am Achaintre,' replies the good man, quite moved. The anecdote is a charming one, and we regret that we are unable to quote it at length.

The increased success of the books on the quays at the time of the Restoration was due to the coming into fashion of foreign authors who had an immoderate reputation amongst us for several years; the sales of Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Schiller, Lessing, and Wieland were enormous. Ladvoat was the first to put this kind of literature on the market, and simply overflowed with

it. But the classics dropped terribly. Viennet, Delavigne, Lamartine, and Hugo already sold well, even occasionally at Sylvestre's sale-rooms in the Rue des Bons-Enfants, where the stall-keepers bought wholesale at the close of the day. But as several rather free and easy books were sold there through the medium of the stall-keepers, they were put down.

In 1822, on the 31st of October, the Prefect of Police, Delavau, issued an edict, lengthily elaborate and highly severe, concerning the stall-keepers in the public streets, whether sellers of books wholesale or retail, or of engravings, lithographs, pictures, or works of art.



'Considering,' says this circular, 'that the keepers of stalls on the public ways frequently expose for sale works, books, or objects of art more or less dangerous or contrary to the law ;

'Considering that stalls cannot be set up without express authority from us, and that the dealers, who make use of this authority as a

means of corrupting the morals or opinions of the public, abuse the authority which would remain responsible for the evil were it not to end it—

'It is ordered as follows :

'1. Every dealer keeping a stall on the public way will at once remove from his stall every book, engraving, or object of art which may be considered by the authorities as contrary to the law and hurtful to morals.

‘2. The stall-keeper who has been cautioned to remove any of the above-mentioned works and has not complied with the order given in reference thereto, and continues to display the aforesaid works or others of a like nature, will be deprived of the right of keeping a stall for the period of one year, and his authority to do so will be definitely withdrawn at the third offence.’

Another ordinance on the 19th of September, 1829, dealt with a more delicate question, that of the sale of books by domestics and children, and more particularly by young scholars short of money. Frequent complaints had been made to the authorities, and hence the action of the police, from whose notice we quote the greater portion :

‘1. All bookstall-keepers and other persons concerned in the sale of books within the boundaries of the prefecture of police are hereby prohibited from purchasing any books or other such works from children, scholars, servants, and domestics, without express consent in writing of their fathers, mothers, guardians, or masters.

‘2. They are also forbidden to purchase from any persons whose names and addresses are not well known, or at least certified by other persons, who must be householders and of substantial means.

‘3. All booksellers, stall-keepers, and other persons engaged in the book trade are enjoined to retain the books offered for sale to them by unknown and suspicious persons, and to forward and deposit them within twenty-four hours in the hands of the police of their district, or to the Maire of their commune, who will receive their declarations.

‘4. The said booksellers and stall-keepers, and all those trading in books and other such works within the limits of the prefecture of police, are hereby required from the date of this ordinance to open and keep two registers,

in which they will state their names and occupations, and enter from day to day consecutively, and without blanks or omissions, their purchases, sales, and exchanges of books with their titles, as well as the names, surnames, occupations and addresses of those from whom they obtained them, and their references.'

This measure had apparently no better success sixty years ago than it has had since, for a few years later, in 1835, Alphonse Karr wrote an article on the second-hand booksellers in the *Nouveau Tableau de Paris au XIX^e Siècle*, published by Madame Béchet, in which appear the following lines:

'There are on the quays, on the boulevards near the Louvre, and in a few by-streets, more than two hundred second-hand booksellers. They are the old-clothes men and marine-store dealers of the book-shops. Their particular business is the buying at public or private sales of old damaged books. They are the people who can supply you with volumes that may be missing from a set. They also sell old engravings and old drawings, stowed away anyhow in old portfolios, and all offered at the same price indiscriminately; that is to say, for three or four sous. There are people who spend their life rummaging these stalls and portfolios, and say that from time to time they discover valuable originals and rare books; but the frequency of these anecdotes, the usual astuteness of the old stall-keepers, who make few mistakes regarding the value of what they possess, and, above all, the petty satisfaction of self-esteem at being thought to be an accomplished judge, able to pick out the work of a famous man among a thousand other drawings, and other such considerations, have often caused us to doubt the truth of these tales.'

Then Alphonse Karr goes on to describe the stall-keepers whose most obvious revenue comes from the schools,

which pour into their hands the dictionaries, Greek, French, and Latin, by way of the young lads blushing with shame and remorse, but desirous of indiarubber balls or apple turnovers. With this state of things neither articles nor ordinances could do anything; all schoolboys have sold, sell, or will sell their books; all of them have gone the same road, and even later on at the law school or the medical school have profited by the facilities of buying as you please to acquire and promptly dispose of such superb publications as *Les Arts Somptuaires* or *L'Histoire du Costume* with the sole object of procuring certain necessary pocket-money, cruelly denied by the niggardliness of parents.

Towards 1830 the stall-keepers not only spread along the quays, but further invaded the little Rue Saint Thomas du Louvre, as they afterwards came to occupy a number of huts in the Place du Carroussel.

The pace of the passers-by was then more leisurely than it is to-day. As Nodier has well said, it was the golden age of the open-air bookseller. The learned and fruitful researches in the boxes of the dealers were prolonged for whole hours on the parapets of the Seine; the learned Montmerqué book-hunted on his way to the Palais, as also did the wise Laboudrie on his way out of the metropolis. Nodier, Barbier, Peignot, Lacroix, even Hugo, were assiduous in their visits to the land of the bookstall, and life was then more provincial, calmer, and happier. In this bright and cheery Paris of the approaches to the Pont Neuf everything lent a pretext for a lounge, and by the side of the sellers of books several street singers had taken up their stand to attract the students of the ballad, the workmen, and the dilatory crowd easily moved by some amorous or sentimental romance in the style of Béranger and his disciples.

Why should they not linger by these banks full of books

which occasionally yielded a fortune to the passing bibliophiles, if we are to believe the enthusiasm of our predecessors?

'It is on the quays,' exclaims Jules Janin with frenzy, 'that there have been found, without coat or cloak, *La Danse aux Aveugles*, *La Chasse Royale*, *La Discours merveilleux de la Vie*, *Actions et Déportements de Catherine de*



Médicis (1650). For the six sous that remained to him Nodier bought *Le Songe de Poliphile*, printed at Venice by the Aldi, and which he sold again for one hundred and thirty-five francs. The quays of Paris have long been the enchanted theatre of these dramas, and have always been of incomparable interest. At each of these discoveries one might say that the Seine herself welcomed the good fortune with her gentlest murmur!

A certain amount of legend in these fabulous tales of white blackbirds is unavoidable. At the very date of these ecstasies of the worthy Janin, Nodier himself in despair was anathematizing the stall-keepers of 1831 as follows :

‘ Things are worse than ever on the quays, where one sees only the silly odds and ends of this modern literature, which will never be ancient literature, and the life of which will evaporate in twenty-four hours, like that of the flies of the river Hypanis ! It is to profane the name of book to give it to these black, blotted rags which can hardly be said to have changed their lot since leaving the basket of the rag-pickers. The quays will henceforth be but the Morgue of contemporary celebrities.’

Which will you believe, Janin, in 1867, speaking of the marvels of 1830, or Nodier, in 1830, despairing of any finds at that epoch ? Is it all nothing but illusion ? Alas ! the more we inquire into it the more we think so.

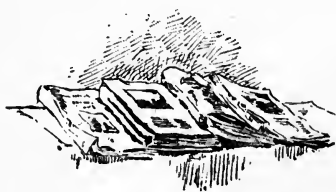
Since the edicts we have just quoted—the last dated 1829—the stall-keepers have not been molested by the authorities. About 1866 there was serious talk of expelling them from the quays and offering them a domicile in the old poultry-market, called La Vallée, which the opening of the Halles Centrales had left vacant on the Quai des Grands-Augustins, where there is now a depot of the Omnibus Company.

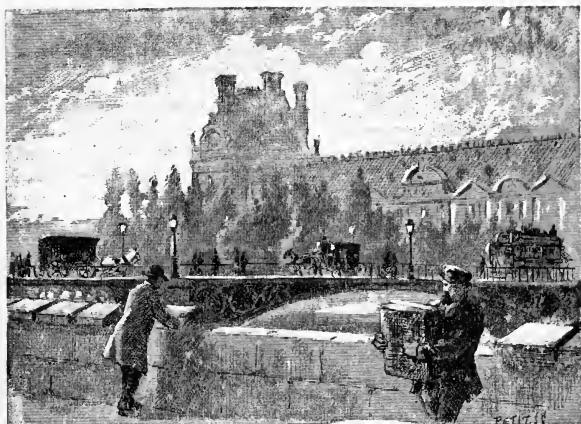
A large book-market would have been opened there, as in certain towns in Germany, and the quays would have been cleared of the temporary stalls. This was, at least, the dream of Baron Haussmann, but learned Parisians pleaded before Napoleon III. the cause of the riparian literature of the Seine, and the owners of the twopenny-halfpenny boxes were again saved for a time.

Since 1880 the trade of second-hand bookseller has

become an open one, as will be seen in our physiological chapter regarding these gentlemen ; and for the last ten years the quays have been absolutely loaded. There is not a place vacant on the left bank between the Pont Royal and the Pont Notre-Dame, and already the right bank possesses a few stalls on the parapets which previously had not been hidden by any portable library. We will show further on that the trade is not always a rosy one, and that the competition is severe ; but many prefer it to regular occupation in a well-warmed office, where the attendance-book constitutes the essential certificate of work—and we cannot say that they are entirely wrong. The trade is independent, healthy, and takes you where the life of the towns touches on the life of the fields, whence most of these worthy fellows come ; then hope gleams on the horizon, for if for a few impetuous booksellers stall-keeping is the last step of the trade, for many of the cautious Normans the parapet of the quays is the pedestal of the well-patronized shop. As a lamented booklover once remarked, many booksellers have started from them and many have ended there.

And among these amiable and wise peripatetics that is a permanent subject for philosophizing.





THE STALL-KEEPERS WHO HAVE DIS- APPEARED.

A FEW TYPES AND PORTRAITS.



SUCH a heading might at first lead one to expect impossible resurrections. Alas! we have neither found nor sought to find the Vale of Jehoshaphat of the bookstall-keepers from the earliest times, and no one has thought of inviting us to a rehearsal, even undress, of this scene, a very special one, in the grand apotheosis of the Last Judgment.

Hence, even in these days, when familiarities with the invisible world exceed all bounds of discretion and respect, we will in no way evoke the shades of the stall-

keepers of ages gone by, whose books, packed on the quays from the Rue Gît-le-Cœur to the Rue de Seine, furnished so many finds to Naudé, the 'grand romancer' of Cardinal Mazarin. Neither will we endeavour to interview beyond the tomb, with an instantaneous camera in our hat, the shades of those old book-strugglers who, after having successively conquered the quays on the left bank, invaded at one time all the Pont Neuf, leaving to their bookselling posterity rights henceforth immovably based on the registered granite of the Seine parapets.

The 'Grand Nocturnal Review of the Bookstall-keepers' is to come, and the subject may have its attractions for us; but in this work it would take too long, and there is some risk that it might be out of place.

If the airy spirits of the stall-keepers of a hundred years and more ago are at large to-day, we should have some remorse in making them enter a table-leg or a slate and pencil to speak or write of their remembrances; if they still float around where they lived, bought and sold, they must feel some pleasure at seeing how the line of the superb boxes of their successors has extended beyond the old limits.

After the edict of 1649, the Pont Neuf, it is true, was not recaptured save, as we have said, under the Revolution.

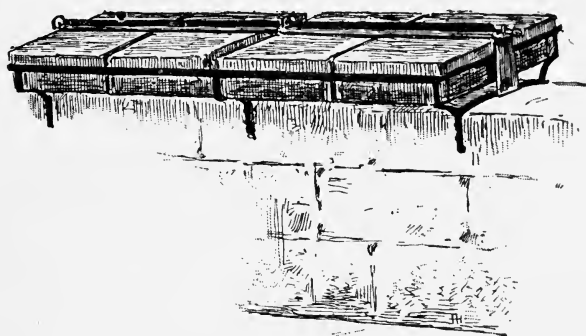


But the entire line of the quays is to-day occupied from the Pont Notre-Dame up to the Pont Royal, and

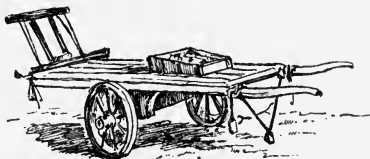
a beginning has been made beyond this bridge, on the Quai d'Orsay, with a view to further extension. The right bank is attacked; sporadic spots, growing larger every year, are noticeable at irregular intervals from the Tuileries to the Arsenal. The parapets belong definitely

to the bookstall ; and to proclaim the universality of its conquest, the bookstall has just installed itself at a bound across the Esplanade des Invalides, on the little parapet of the ditch behind which the inoffensive bronze cannon play at defending the gilded dome where shelter the comrades, variously damaged, of the legendary hero with the wooden head.

These ancestral spirits ought to be equally flattered at the comfort and solidity of the new installations. They



may perhaps treat their successors as *aristos*, as loafers and sybarites, when they look at their new arrangements. Fine boxes lined with zinc, with lids that rise and form a sloping roof, are locked down every night to the iron bars which are embedded in the granite. The daily bringing and removing, the expenditure of money and muscular force required by the wheelbarrow, which had to be loaded, dragged, and unloaded twice a day, morning and evening, are in great part suppressed. The books, less rubbed and knocked about, are less damaged, keep their



price longer, and are in better form for the attraction of the customer. Two or three electric lamps judiciously placed enable the seller of old books to keep open his stall at night. There are among the innovating spirits of the corporation some who have already thought of this; apply to M. Jacques, whose stall is on the Quai Conti. And what could be more delightful and charming than a stroll along the quays on a summer evening from nine o'clock to midnight under such conditions? There is one obstacle to this, it is true, which does not arise from police regulations, nor from difficulties of management, but from the indifference and apathy, if not the idleness, of the dealers.

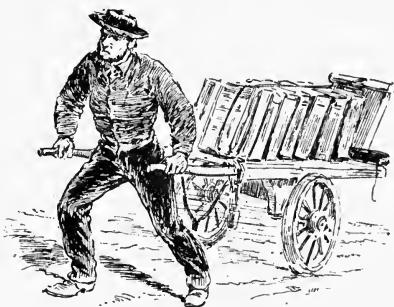
Go along the quays on a Sunday; there is scarcely one stall open in twenty. There are other reasons, of course—and I admit they are good ones—the Sunday observance; a well-earned rest; a trip into the country, cheap, but healthy and exhilarating, with the wife and children; and the fewness of the customers, who do not crowd to the quays on that day. We have nothing to say against all this; religious principles and sanitary precautions are entitled to respect. But you do not shut up shop when you want to sell, and the dozen of obstinate heretical stall-holders who offer their wares to the book-hunters on Sundays as on other days have no reason to complain of the customers, few and various as they may be.

How many men of study of all degrees of science and erudition, dwellers on the left bank, which is as it were the intellectual plexus of Paris, would spend a few hours of their Sundays on the quays in a seductive and useful lounge, from which their university and other occupations debar them at any other time! Most of these now stay away, not caring to pass in review the lids beneath which are hidden the very books they wish to consult on that day. The disappointment is really painful, and one can

have too much of it, although book-hunting on the quays has its disappointments, even on working days. But the chances are less than on the Sundays, though they exist, and every buyer of old books is to his sorrow obliged to admit it bitterly.

The day of the most matutinal stall-keepers does not begin until nine o'clock. Then one by one, at long intervals, the stalls begin to open as if with regret. The dealers who have not yet availed themselves of the privilege of starting a permanent

stall arrive between the shafts of a little barrow more or less heavily loaded. They lay out their boxes side by side, with astonishing deliberation and an entire absence of haste; then, leaving them



there, duly tied up with string or padlocked, they take back their empty barrow; but to avoid having to shut up a second time, and out of pure desire to save time, they do not return until they have had their luncheon. In this way they form their rank, some coming, others going, from ten o'clock in the morning until one in the afternoon. By that time all the boxes are open, or nearly all; and there ought to be a keeper at every stall. Most of them, however, are away; one is away on business, another is taking a walk, another is having a drink and talking politics at the bar close by. Often a keeper is in charge of two or three stalls; if he has a buyer at each of the three at the same time, how can he attend to them all?

Besides, it is not for him to give any particulars about the books that do not belong to him, nor to take any

deductions from the price the customer is asked ; for his neighbours all he can do is to sell at marked prices, without endeavouring in any way to interest the inquirer.

To which of us has it not happened to take up a book out of the box and, finding it worth buying, to have to sweep the horizon to the right, the left, the rear, and give a vigorous 'Pst ! pst ! pst !' and shout 'Who looks after this stall ?' without anybody appearing or replying ?

When the price is marked on the box, and the wish to have the book is strong, we risk doing as we do at a newspaper kiosk when there is nobody there, and we take the volume and leave the money in its place. So much the worse if someone comes after us and gives the half-pence left out in the cold the more rational shelter of his pocket. But if the book is among those labelled "various prices," what is to be done beyond putting it back in its place and moving off with a grunt against all absent loafers ? The dealer is the victim, and herein loses one of his chief chances of profit.

The shortcomings of the stall-keepers—we should not be their true friend if we were afraid to point them out—are, after all, venial, and distinguished by a sort of bantering and superior philosophy which is rather amusing to analyse. We may perhaps have an opportunity of doing this. Anyhow, their indifference receives a vigorous shock as soon as anything is said concerning their rights, or their institution, as we may call it.



It will have been seen that it is not without vicissitude and struggle that they gained the tranquil enjoyment of the parapets of old Paris, to fix themselves there, and to encrust themselves there immovably, like certain shellfish on the rock.

It is not such a very long time ago that they were in danger of being purely and simply 'Hausmannized'—that is to say, swept away like old rags by the prefectural administration.

The Baron—to whom the building trade is unpardonable for not having erected a statue in stone, lath and plaster—was most anxious to clear the quays. Such irregular and curious excrescences vexed his æsthetic soul. This long, low wall seemed to him much finer, much nobler, much more rectilineal, cleared of parasites, cleaned with potash, and rubbed with pumice. He dreamt of the quays of Paris, clean, tidy and correct, and to realize his ideal of the long strip of stone he thought it was only necessary to drive away the stall-keepers:—an Edict, and there was an end of the matter.

But it did not do, and on that occasion the great Prefect could neither expel nor expropriate. The alarm-cry of the threatened people found an echo. We know the part of saviour which on that occasion was played by their faithful friend, the good, the learned, the witty and lamented Bibliophile Jacob. He went straight to the Emperor, and so worked on the humanitarian side of that old suppressor of pauperism that he got him to take the stall-keepers under his protection. The monarch condescended to visit the stall-keepers with the Bibliophile as his guide. Dear old Paul Lacroix, about 1880, when the Arsenal evenings were coming to an end, used to delight in relating the active part he took in the affair, and it was a pleasure to listen to him.

On that memorable day when it was a matter of life and death for the stall-holders, one of them, already well known, found a way—assuredly without seeking it, and in the pure innocence of his heart—of making himself for ever illustrious.

As the Emperor passed, in the course of his visit, along

the Quai Malaquais, opposite the Rue de Saints Pères, he saw an old man warming himself chillily at a fire of papers in a portable stove. From time to time he took a volume from a pile of books by his side and tore out a



handful of leaves to feed the fire. The Emperor approached and, with some interest, wished to know what work was thought so valueless as to be used as a combustible. Père Foy—who is not acquainted with his reputation to-day?—quietly handed the volume to his Sovereign, and Napoleon III. read with stupefaction the head-line in these triumphal words: ‘CONQUÊTES ET VICTOIRES DES FRANÇAIS.’

What thoughts coursed through the troubled soul of the terrible crowned dreamer when he saw this book, specially written to light and feed the flame in the people’s hearts, used as a means of heat for the decrepit body of an old bookstall man?

Perhaps he had no thoughts; the pallid smile of the mighty—happily for them—has often covered their unintelligence of the eternal and amusing irony of things. The wandering fancy of the Emperor may or may not have remarked it; but Père Foy was a type which deserves a moment’s notice.

Let us not attempt too much in this restoration of outline portraits, endeavouring rather to accept only such documents and pictures as rest on oral tradition or living memory. It would undoubtedly have pleased us to rummage the past and speak of types long since vanished of those of the First Empire and the Restoration. A detailed circumstantial portrait of Achaintre,

the legendary scholar whose editions were appreciated by the Latinists and Hellenists, might evidently attract us, and as the good old fellow has to a certain extent excited the fervour of our aged bibliographers, the task would have been easy. But would not that lead us away from our already extensive subject? Should we not rather speak of Lesné, who was so famous on the quays about 1840, or even allude to the forgotten, like Durand, whose stall was near the Café d'Orsay, and who, by investing his profits from bookselling in landed property, managed to secure an income, honestly earnt, of six thousand livres a year?

This excursion, too retrospective, and consequently too particular, cannot be undertaken here; and out of consideration for the harmony of this book we must restrict our attention to the immediate predecessors of contemporary stall-keepers.

Let us first speak of Père Foy. Père Foy was not a bookstall man by birth; one is not born a bookseller, but becomes it. A legendary and respectable past surrounded him. His name had not been revealed to the public, undoubtedly; but who does not know that in the world of failures every masterpiece hides some unknown assistant? Ah! if Scribe could tell everything, what did he not owe to Père Foy?

Such was the language of enthusiasts. Others, less credulous or better informed, did not deny the influence exercised by Père Foy on the dramatic art in France; but they limited the sphere of action to the seats of the Romans; that is to say, the pit of the Comédie, where Père Foy was for a long time a chief of the claque.

What adventure took him from the seat in the theatre and threw him on to the quay? Perhaps a passion for business, an ambition to go into trade; assuredly no reason disgraceful or unavowable, for at first his only

customers were of the world of theatres, artists and authors. His business, it may easily be believed, consisted chiefly in words; rarely indeed did he part with a book for its representative value in money. This artistic and literary patronage, of which he loved to boast, brought him into relief among his fellow stall-holders, but did not result in much profit. The fire, however, which devoured the greater part of his stock of books at his poor lodgings in the Rue Mazarine was a regular stroke of luck for him. This fire from the sky brought him fifteen thousand francs, cash down, paid by the insurance company. For him it was the treasure of Golconda, the greatest prize of his life.

Henceforth Père Foy did nothing; he did not renew his books; he did not change his clothes; he let his feet protrude beyond his socks; all the shirt he had was just enough to carry a collar. Providence had shown him the destination of his books; of those he had left he made fuel, and to the end of his life they served him for cooking and warmth. But all the same he came on to the quay and laid out his boxes, which got emptier and emptier as he got raggeder and raggeder, and yet always so proud in his rags that he would allow no one to replace them.

'Who could buy such horrors?' exclaimed a lady one day as she passed by on her husband's arm, glancing at the volumes, torn, cockled, greasy, and dusty, which still lay in lamentable fewness on the good man's stall. Stung to the quick, he rose, and with a gesture worthy of Frédéric Lemaître he replied, 'They are the works of the learned, madame!' The truth being that the poor old books which fate had preserved from the fire were hardly worth tearing up.

A subject worthy of a heroico-comic epic, if there is a poet left to write it, was the Homeric strife by words, if not by blows, sustained for many years by these rival

stall-keepers. Each of the three claimed to be the eldest of the corporation. It would appear that the difference could be easily settled by a glance at the birth certificates of the pretenders. But to be a simplicitist you must have great knowledge or great ignorance, and our stall-keepers had but a moderate dose of either, and cunning had woven its web in all the corners of their brain.

One, Père Rosez, said, not without apparent logic, 'I am the oldest, therefore I am the senior.' 'Undoubtedly,' said the others, 'but you are comparatively young amongst us.' And when he died at the age of eighty-three, like the poet Tennyson, he had only been twenty years on the quays.

His tardy entry into second-hand bookselling had been caused by home troubles daily renewed. His wife, who managed a stationery shop in the Rue des Saints-Pères, did not care about giving him pocket-money for his tobacco. Hence quarrels, which the good man's peevish humour made the most of. In short, he resolved to earn his tobacco himself, and he carried to a vacant spot on the Quai Voltaire four boxes, neither more nor less, full of soiled and worthless books, whence emerged *Abécédaires* and *Oracles des Dames*. The sale of these two works assured his daily income, which rarely exceeded fourpence. But nevertheless he bore his dignity as stall-keeper very high, and would put up with injury from neither the public nor his colleagues. For his four boxes he occupied several yards of the quay, and if his neighbour to the right or left, encumbered with goods, encroached ever so little over the limits there was a great disturbance. It was worth while to watch him clearing his preserves, bundling up the usurping books and pushing them over the frontier; then he would put his four boxes close together, and, to assert his claim

more strongly, would leave vacant all the space he had reconquered.

The second pretender to seniority also rested his claim on age. Whether older or younger than Rosez—the question was, I believe, never decided—Père Malorey, a Norman from the neighbourhood of Coutances, was in his eighty-second year when he died in January, 1890. He was certainly brought up in the trade, having begun in 1825 with Madame Joly, also a Norman, who sold music and prints at a shop, not yet demolished, at the Institute. Everyone knew his stall on the Quai Conti, at the corner of the Pont des Arts, which he occupied for sixty-two years. He often had interesting books, but he knew their value and stuck to his price. Strictly honest, he often did a good turn to the public libraries by handing them over stolen books which chance had brought to him. He showed with pride a letter from M. Léopold Delisle, thanking him in his own name and in that of his colleagues for a service of this kind. He was even prouder of the evidence he gave in favour of a pupil of the Institute accused of theft from the Mazarine library. To save the innocent, said Papa Malorey, was better than repairing the fault of the guilty.

Known and esteemed by the world of booksellers, bibliophiles, and the learned, who found books at his stall and information in his talk, Père Malorey had his name brought before the public by M. Tony Révillon, in an article in *La Petite Presse* (September 1, 1868) with regard to his generous conduct towards his ruined brother, whose goods he bought in. A pamphlet published at his death by M. Victor Advielle, under the title of *Notice sur M. Malorey, Doyen des Bouquinistes Français* (imp. E. Watelet, 1890; 8vo. 5 pp.), gives all these details and others equally curious.

Often on a sunny day have we chatted for an hour

with this good man, whose judgment, good sense, and perspicacity on everything about old books were worth consulting, and whose mimicry during his digressions was very amusing.

Rosez claimed seniority on the ground of age ; Malorey disputed this, adding that it was the years spent in the business which conferred the right to the title, and that he had been on the quays forty years before Rosez appeared there for the first time. A third, 'M. Debas,' as he called himself with respect, was a little younger than the other two ; but he had started his stall a little before Malorey had established his, and, adopting the same reasoning as to the time spent in the trade, claimed for himself the glorious title of *Doyen des Bouquinistes*.

In one of his gossiping papers in the *Temps* on the reception of Leconte de Lisle at the Academy, M. Anatole France, himself a child of the quays and son of the book-shop, on coming away from this sitting of the Institute, of which he was soon to become a member, tried his hand at a charming sketch of Père Debas, then become very old and 'quite little' with age (April 3, 1887).

'Every year his height grows less, and his stall grows smaller and lighter. If death leaves my old friend a little longer to live, a puff of wind will some day carry him off with the last pages of his books and the few oats that the neighbouring horses drop from their gray nose-bags. Meanwhile, he is almost happy. If he is poor, he does not think about it. He does not sell his books, but he reads them. He is an artist and a philosopher.

'When it is fine he enjoys the gentle ease of living in the open air. He sits down at the end of a bench with a pot of glue and a pencil, and as he mends his damaged books he meditates on the immortality of the soul. He interests himself in politics, and wants nothing if he

meets an undoubted customer with whom he can criticise the existing state of affairs. He is an aristocrat, and even an oligarch. The habit of seeing in front of him across the Seine the palace of the Tuileries has inoculated him with a sort of familiarity with regard to sovereigns. Under the Empire he criticised Napoleon III. with the severity of a neighbour whom nothing escapes. Now he explains by the conduct of the Government the vicissitudes of his trade. I do not deny that my old friend is somewhat of a grumbler.

‘He hails me, and says like a man who has read his morning paper, “You come from the Academy. Did the young people speak well of M. Hugo?” Then with a wink he whispers me in my ear, “A bit of a demagogue is M. Hugo!”’

M. Debas—you will not be surprised at it—made up his stock of books in his own image. Modern romancists were proscribed by him, and he rarely had a book printed within less than a century; but if a sympathetic buyer, especially a priest—his connection among priests was his honour and his joy—consulted him regarding a volume of the ‘grand siècle,’ the good man would pour forth all his erudition, and end by declaring his vehement enthusi-



asm for the past and his savage contempt for the present.

One event had made a deep impression on the life of this excellent man. At a session of the assizes he had

been put on the list of jurors. He was never tired of relating this memorable fact, finding himself every time he told the tale in the same state of mind in which such very dissimilar circumstances had plunged him. One of his young colleagues many times heard him tell the story. One day he told it to us, and I am of opinion that, in spite of its length, no editorial artifice could improve his sincere and simple tautology. It was enough to ask him the question, 'Have you ever been on a jury, M. Debas?' and immediately, like water from an overflowing basin, he would launch forth with untiring animation:

'Yes, sir; it was in 1872. I then lived at the Hôtel du Prince de Chimay, opposite my stall. I lived eighteen years there, monsieur, and was well liked. I lived there with my poor wife. She is dead, sir; we had been married for twenty-eight years. You will understand I could not live in the same room after that. The evening I went back I saw my poor dead wife in all its corners. Twenty-eight years, sir. Ah, it is very sorrowful to be alone!'

'And the jury, M. Debas?'

'Ah, yes, the jury—it was in 1872, monsieur. One day there was a ring at my door. I opened it, and saw a gendarme.



'“M. Debas, if you please?” “I am he, monsieur.” “Well, M. Debas, here is an invitation to the assizes; you are on the jury.” “Oh, monsieur; but there must be a mistake. I am not

a bookseller; I am a bookstall-keeper, and never did a bookstall-keeper serve on a jury." "You are really M. Louis-Jean Debas?" "Yes, monsieur." "And you were really born on the 9th of April, 1812?" "Yes, monsieur." "Then the invitation is for you."

"I was very much upset, for I am not rich. It is necessary for me to earn my daily bread every day, and I could not put my poor suffering wife at the stall. I tried to find out the name of the President of the assizes. It was a M. de Lafaulotte, who was one of my customers. Then I went to him. I rang; the door was opened, and I asked: "M. de Lafaulotte, if you please?" "He is here, monsieur." "Can I speak to him?" "Yes, monsieur, if you will come in."

"I was shown into a room, and there I saw M. de Lafaulotte, whom I knew well. I took off my hat, I went forward, and I said: "Good-morning, monsieur; you don't recognise me, but I know you well. I am M. Debas; I sell second-hand books opposite the Hôtel du Prince de Chimay, and I have had the honour to sell you a few." "Ah! very good, very good! I know you. Well, what can I do for you, my good fellow?" "Monsieur, I have received a summons for the assizes; I am on the jury; but, monsieur, I do not keep a bookshop—mine is only a bookstall, and never has a bookstall man been on a jury. And I am not rich; I have daily to earn my daily bread, and it would be a serious loss to me to be away from my stall, because I could not put my wife in charge of it, as she is ill; and so I came to see if there is any way by which I can be struck off the jury list." Then M. de Lafaulotte said to me: "Listen, my good friend: it would cost you more time to get struck off the list than to attend on this occasion; come, then, and when I can I will excuse you. You are an honest man, monsieur; good-day, sir; good-day, my friend."

‘And, in fact, I went to the assizes. But the first day, after the names had been called, M. de Lafaulotte said: “I excuse M. Debas—I excuse M. Debas.” Then I stepped towards the Procureur Royal.’

‘De la République, M. Debas.’

‘Ah! yes, yes. I stepped towards the Procureur Royal, and I said to him: “Pardon, M. le Procureur, the President has said, ‘I excuse M. Debas’; am I free?” “Yes, my good friend, you are free; but you must be here to-morrow morning.”’

‘I returned in the morning, and for fifteen days; but I only sat two or three times, and it was lucky that there were two Sundays in that fifteen!’

Driven from the Hôtel de Chimay by the shade of his wife, Debas found shelter in a ground-floor in the Rue Furstemberg; and there he died in the severe winter of 1890-91. He had been a stall-keeper since 1832, while his rival, Malorey, had not set up until 1833, and profited by his experience and his advice.

The Hôtel de Chimay sheltered another individual of a less amiable character. This was a short fat man, with red whiskers turning gray, who walked like a jockey, and answered to the name of M. Maynard. His companions called him Baron Maynard, for his relations with the deputies of the Right, whom he supplied with documents, had given him a sort of aristocratic arrogance which was very amusing. His stall was in front of the hotel, and, seated on a stool covered with



faded carpet, he showed immense disdain for the poor stall-keepers on the parapet opposite. Stall-keeper! Absurd! He was a bookseller, and did not mind saying so to those who were unaware of the fact. His specialty was official reports, which he piled up in the recess of one of the barred windows of the Hôtel de Chimay, where he also hung them up on strings. Statistics, parliamentary papers, yellow books, speeches—all the printed rubbish of the Chambers was to be found at his stall. His moral specialty was backbiting and envy. To know a person was, as far as Maynard was concerned, to know a vice. He rarely spoke of anyone without saying something about him relative to the criminal court. Society was composed of blackguards and bandits, and he, Maynard, the bookseller, impassively judged them.

Of this type he was not the only representative. It is not only against the palings in front of old hotels that they stand. He has his representatives in all the professions and in all social conditions; but to keep to dealers in books, which is our particular business here, we know such and such a bookseller in a fine, well-stocked shop, issuing monthly catalogues and inserting advertisements in the *Journal de la Librairie*, who thinks and talks as does M. Maynard. To listen to them, they have never had to do but with sharpers and thieves; everyone has a skeleton in the cupboard, and the sly bookseller has the keys of all the Bluebeard chambers; and with his arms akimbo and his mouth in a pout he reels off his horrors to the customer who comes, and piles them on the back of the customer who goes. And knowing that your reputation will be torn in a similar way as the carcase is torn by the crow, you listen complaisantly to the calumny of your friend or relative, and smile at the calumniator, who, profiting by the opportunity, between two mouthfuls of venom concludes a bargain which makes you pay

dearly for the poison he has given you to drink in his shop.

The 'Baron Maynard,' driven from the Hôtel de Chimay by the enlargement of the École des Beaux Arts, tried to sell his stock for 5,000 francs, but was unable to do so, and, turned out of his position, he died in the weariness of the idle, about 1888.

If you had frequented the quays twenty years ago, you would have stopped for a moment at a stall where the old partitions alternated with old books at the angle of the Pont des Saints-Pères and the Quai Voltaire. If anything had tempted your curiosity, if you had picked up and put down in the box any romances or operas, you would have seen rise at your elbow the dealer, stern of aspect and rough of voice, who would say to you, 'You must not touch!' That was Charlier, an old fellow, eccentric and crotchety, who defended his property.

Frequently the bystander resented it. Then arose Homeric disputes. One day a book-hunter, at a loss for an epithet, called him a costermonger. Charlier, considering he was libelled, would have given him in charge if he could. His eccentricities became so unrestrained that he gradually drove his customers away; but as he had 6,000 francs a year he could afford to look on this with indifference and disdain. Charlier is still famous on the Quai de Voltaire.

Corresponding to Père Malorey, at the other corner of



the Pont des Arts, was old Lécivain, dirty, pimply, hideous. The different fiery brandies with which he had played havoc with his throat had left him for his few remaining years but a sort of spirituous whisper in the guise of a voice. His breath was enough to make an Auvergnat drunk; but he was a Norman, and his astuteness was always afloat, although his reason might be drowned. He knew what books were, and at a glance could gauge the buyer's inclination. He lowered or raised his prices according to his judgment of his men. It was a psychologic tariff, which he brought to bear splendidly before four o'clock in the afternoon; but by that time drink had assumed command of him, and then the fummy Lécivain was at the mercy of the customer who knew how to manage him. He would let the coveted volume go at half its proper price, and throw into the bargain an affectionate look and a bouquet of thanks odorous of absinthe.

Of the drunken type, we have another example in Isnard,



surnamed Trompe-la-Mort, or the Tonkinois. Clothed in repulsive rags, exhaling fetid odours, and frightfully dirty, he excited the disgust and pity of the passers-by, and more than one bought a worthless book of him for the sake of doing him a charity in giving him three-halfpence. When

your courage was equal to stirring up a little this parcel of physical and moral rottenness, he would favour you with stories of adventures and debauches, which he

would relate with cynical complacency. Isnard had seen much of Europe and America—here as a commercial traveller, there as a shopkeeper, elsewhere as a barber, everywhere as a man of pleasure and a rascal. In his disorder he had known how to earn money, and in his forties his health had suddenly given way at a last assault of debauchery, and he had suddenly become a sordid miser. He lived on bread and garlic, abandoned all notions of cleanliness, and became a moving mass of vermin, in which his crapulous soul found a suitable habitation.

The really poor man on the quays at this period was M. Formage, an old editor of music, fallen into the blackest misery. It was what remained of his magazine that formed his stock-in-trade, which he never increased nor renewed. In the evening he took his old music into some corner where charitable people gave him shelter, and, spreading it out like a litter, slept upon it. No matter how poor he was, when even he was unable to pay the twopence for his little barrow, he never let a day pass without buying a *Figaro*. The first money he took, no matter if it were one halfpenny or three, was devoted to this purchase. He could do without a meal, but not without his newspaper. This touching fidelity was, I suppose, unknown in the Rue Drouot, or they would probably have helped so devoted a reader, or, at least, have done him some service. Perhaps they did; at any rate, M. Formage was eventually admitted as organist into an asylum for old men.

Another necessitous and peculiar stall-keeper of the Quai Voltaire was Père Hazard, well known to book-hunters, who was admitted recently into the alms-houses of the brothers Galignani at Levallois.

Every whit as poor was Eugène Flauraud, an old

pupil of the Jesuits of Poitiers and the Issy seminary, a poet having a volume (*Juvenilia*, 1877-82) on Vanier, an enthusiastic dreamer on Balzac, the hero being himself, his head full of financial speculations and of visions of literary glory, incapable of succeeding in anything,



and walking up and down in front of a few dozen books, which he spread out on the parapet with as much intelligence of reality as a Knight of the Round Table in the forest of Brocéliande. Reduced to absolute want, he returned one fine morning to his provincial sheepfold, which he had so imprudently abandoned; but misfortune, which clung to him so closely, never left him, and he was drowned accidentally a short time afterwards in the Vienne.

An eccentric stall-keeper we still remember with affection, for we knew him at the beginning of our book-hunting passion in 1875, was the good and excellent Raquin, from Troyes, whose stand was on the Quai Malaquais, near the advertisement column of the theatres. We can see him still, with his sharp, cheery, good-tempered Champenois look, and his expansive affection when talking to patrons who meant business. Raquin, who was then about thirty-five years old, was a scholar well versed in Greek, which he wrote fluently. He had in the Rue Mazarine a shop full of books, where we often spent entire days together, candle in hand, disinterring from dark corners authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of which we found many. For his price he would stand out with a vivacity, a spirit, and a humour which awoke in us a similar vein of obstinate, hilarious bargaining.

Ah, Raquin! his memory will be ever green with us, for he was one of the first to contribute to the foundations of our library, now so numerous, and, alas! not yielding us the ideal joys of days gone by. One morning we heard of his sudden death in his lodgings in the Rue Mazarine. As he lived unmarried, the cause of his decease was never known. He had not come to the quay as usual; they went in search of him, broke open the door, and found him lying dead across his room. Poor fellow! had he some secret sorrow under that pleasant humour with which he cheered up all the good bibliophiles who often stopped on the quays for a chat with him? Who will ever know?

Alas, poor Raquin!

At a corner of the Pont des Saints-Pères stood another variety of bouquinopole, old Le-quiller, risen from a school and a village shop to the Parisian quays. Majestic, solemn, and stiff, he remained, by education and aptitude, ignorant of the contents of his wares—like many other members of the Society of Friends of Books. He sold his goods by sight and smell, asking three francs for a book worth fivepence and conversely. A compliment on his studious tastes and the extent of his knowledge would melt his haughty heart; he was unable to resist it; the price you offered was his, and he would



favour you over and above your bargain with advice and observations about literature which you could not help enjoying.

Less ignorant and more comical in aspect was Père Confait, an old disciple of Saint Simon, who was always ready for a gossip about his ex-brethren of Ménilmontant, mentioning the most famous and the most gifted, and comparing, not without bitterness, their lot with his mediocrity. With his large projecting eyes, behind an enormous pair of silver spectacles, his long stiff hair, his bristly beard, he was a living argument in favour of the theories that affirm our simian origin. For fifteen years he could be seen in front of the Mint, by the side of the cab-kiosk, sharing his repast on the box of his little book-barrow with his wife, who was no less eccentric-looking than himself, and a horrible old poodle, nearly blind, on which was centred all the tenderness of its master and mistress. The rest of the time he fidgeted about, looking wearied and out of health, huddling up his books, which he never sold cheap.

We must not pass in silence Janssens the Belgian, with his red beard, whose placid face and sly and silly smile was a curious combination of the amiable and the distressing; for he had the gait of Quasimodo, stunted and crooked under the burden of his books, a kind of malformation which attracted pity, while there was a suspicion of mischief in his jeering Flemish look.

Janssens was employed for a long time at Marpon's under the galleries of the Odéon, before he pitched his camp on the Quai Voltaire, on the parapets near the Pont des Saints-Pères. Very active and wide awake, in constant communication with the world of journalists, he was a keen buyer of works on bibliography, to sell them again to amateurs on the watch, who sought them out at his lodgings in the Rue Bonaparte. Janssens might

have made his fortune, for he was naturally clever, but he could neither resist the smiles of women nor the smiles of absinthe and the other attractions of the 'Assommoir' in front of him. Woman and alcohol ruined him. Two years ago he was at work for Le Soudier, and there he stole books and passed the frontier. He deserved some indulgence, for, in truth, he was not a bad fellow.

Always at his side was another stall-keeper, his double and his *alter ego*, or *Bibi la grillade*, who drank without thirst, joyous to look upon, and always on the quay. This amiable fellow, rubicund of visage and obliging in bearing, was known to his colleagues as *Le Noble le Mazurier*. His real name was Le Mazurier, but, as he had often claimed aristocratic relationship, his neighbours nicknamed him accordingly. Le Mazurier was one of the most obliging stall-keepers on the quays.

The list of stall-keepers who have disappeared would be interminable, even if it only comprised those of the last twenty-five years. But we must say something of the one-armed man whom generations have known, and then of Dubosq the First, who stood near the Pont des Arts (also a Norman), and who left behind him in the shape of nephews quite a dynasty of Dubosqs. Old Dubosq died when he was seventy; occasionally he had some good books, and if he was well stocked on the quay, his shop in the Rue Bonaparte was none the less furnished with excellent works. But we must hasten, or we shall never have done with these stall-keepers of yesterday.

Who else is there? To our memory returns another oddity, Ambs, who kept the Bouquinerie Voltaire facing



the Pont des Saints-Pères. Ambs was young, active, and would probably have made a fortune if his ruddy mistress, the Bottle Goddess, had not ruined his constitution. His colleagues had named him *Amer Picon*, for he drank about fifteen or twenty glasses of that appetiser during the day. 'By encouraging his appetite,' said one of his neighbours, 'he has killed himself.'

Among the most recent who have passed from the quays we ought to say something of Gustave Boucher, who left a notary's office at Niort to come to Paris, out of love for books, a conquest to bibliography—so he told us—through reading our old review, *Le Livre*. Young, and frail, and delicate, he started as a stall-keeper on the Quai Voltaire. Gentle as a hero of Musset, elegant, and always correct, he had a hard time of it at first, often accompanied on the quay by a little woman, Mimi Pinson, of the Quartier Latin, who helped him in the housing of his boxes. Boucher brought almost under our very windows, about seven years ago, a romance as it were of love and letters, of impassioned and studious youth, by turns an idyll and a bibliognostic vocation, very curious and most affecting. To-day he is in the office of the Beaux Arts, cultivating with rare refinement literature and the world of letters, without attempting to forget his temporary position among the stall-keepers, whose friend he remains. We owe him many notes judiciously collected, and we salute him as we pass.

Abel Tarride, the popular actor at the Nouveautés, and who in *Champignol malgré lui* gave so much comic vigour to a military part, was also a stall-keeper on the Quai Voltaire, and preferred to sell the literary wrecks that foundered there, as in a last refuge, rather than religious odds and ends at home in the provinces. In the evening when his stall was closed he went out to act, no matter where, in the most eccentric parts, in order to learn his

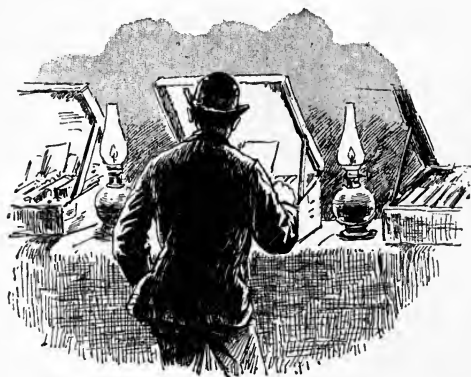
trade on the suburban boards. Do not the quays lead to everywhere?

How many others, amusing or interesting in different ways, have disappeared! To say nothing of Père Lécureux, who had in Piédagnel his mediocre biographer, let us pass in the dark chamber of our memory young Pelet, surnamed Gingerhead, who, with Janssens, was one of the stall-keepers best known to bibliophiles for good books, and particularly for classics, old poets, and first editions; then there was Laporte, of whom we shall have something to say presently, and who was through an anagram known as l'Apôtre, not in remembrance of the first vocation that was attributed to him, for he was never unfrocked, but because he published the *Bibliographie Faune*, the *Bibliographie Clerico-galante*, under the title of *L'Apôtre Bibliographe*. His trade emblem was a half-open door with these curious words beneath: *A Laporte, la porte*. Quite a character he was, with a look of importance as of Père Hyacinthe Loyson in moustaches, always wearing his hat, a bitter-looking mouth, a discontented, haughty bearing, fluent and talkative—quite a benediction. A stout brunette of Southern type, his wife, his sister, or his daughter—we know not too much of him—helped him on the quay every day. She may be there still. Then there was Legoubin, whose stall was loaded with the refuse, or the beginnings, of the shop he owned in the neighbourhood; and Gougny in a dynasty of five, father, sons, and uncles; and Joux, whose oddities are worth a monograph to themselves; and Bridoux, who from a modest stall in the open air blossomed forth into the splendours of the *bouquinerie centrale* near the Pont Neuf.



Who yet? The brave Papa Rosselin, of the Quai Malaquais, who opened his stall in 1853, and is to-day the undisputed senior of the quays. Excellent man, one of the last picturesque figures of the time, recognisable by his white blouse under the coat, by his sabots on his feet, the cap on his white hair, and his face divided by the large blue spectacles, which give him a grotesque look, and make him a good subject for a painter.

We ought also to mention Delahaye. After assisting his father, who published various annotated editions of ancient authors, among others the *Bibliothèque Gauloise*,



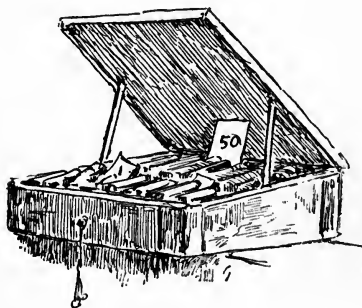
in green cloth covers, which all bibliophiles remember, Delahaye for some time kept a shop in the Rue Casimir-Delavigne; and then he went down in the world with a run, after having from the days of Bibliophile Jacob held his head high among the booksellers, and started on the Quai de la Mégisserie, where not only did he open an extensive stall, stocked with the remainders of his old books, but distinguished from all the rest by being lighted with a long range of paraffin lamps, which had a most startling effect. He remained for more than a year, about 1887 or 1888, a nocturnal and solitary bookstall man.

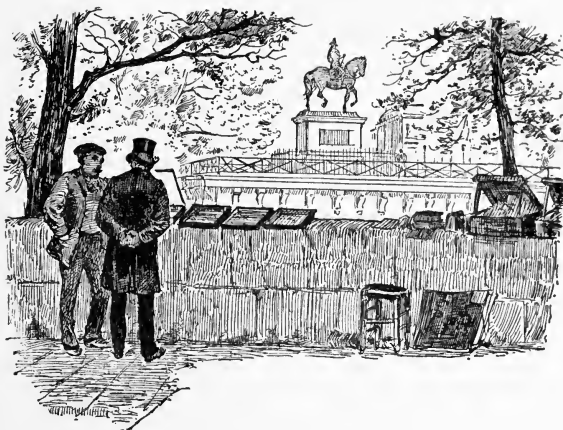
But probably his illumination attracted more bats, mosquitoes, and moths than belated book-hunters, for he suddenly ceased to light up. More is the pity! It was picturesque and amusing, this *bouquinage aux lanternes*, with the gleaming copper of the lamps, and the strange lights that the puffs of wind gave the books as they made the yellow flames jump and stagger.

If bookshop-keepers who have become bookstall men are common, there are at least not a few instances of bookstall men becoming bookshop-keepers. Most of these are Normans, as we have seen in several instances; they excel in a business where scent is the indispensable quality, and in which almost all others could be dispensed with. Astute and bold, hot in blood and cool in mind, the Normans might be described in wit and truth *Juifs du papier*. They know all the bookshops from Morgand to Legoubin; they know how to buy at the cheapest and sell at the dearest—which is the true secret of trade in our admirable social order. If, with that, they can master their inclinations sufficiently to keep themselves sober and chaste, every chance of success is theirs. It was thus that Dubosq, of whom we have spoken, attained a respectable fortune, which he lost in a Stock Exchange speculation, for he was not always content with books. It is thus that Pillet successively passed from a stall against a paling to a stall on the parapets, and from the parapets to a handsome shop where he does business in a large way. This old Pillet is of a type which has not yet disappeared. Amid a heap of old books, placed in Rembrandtish half-light, he walks, always cap on head, with the weariness of a man who sees that the taste of the day is not with the old, and that he is more than twenty years behind his age.

We might multiply examples, but these will serve us as a means of transition from the bookstall men of the past to those of the present. All the stall-keepers of the quays

have in some obscure corner of one of their boxes this marshal's baton of the bookshop, which many of the cleverest of them have known how to wield. If we were not afraid of making them blush for their origin, certain big booksellers now alive, substantial, expansive, proud, and majestic, might be quoted among the *bouquinistes* who have risen to the dignity of *libraires-éditeurs*. But hush! Let us be silent—anger not anyone. This chapter is already too long.





THE STALL-KEEPERS OF TO-DAY.

CHARACTERS AND ODDITIES.



LET the physiologist who would explore the quays of Paris for the detailed study of their tenants attempt to delineate a typical stall-keeper, and he will, we think, be wasting his time and his powers of synthesis. Undoubtedly originals are not wanting in a profession which, like that of cab-driver, old clo' man, publican, and lodging-house-keeper, is one of the five or six most open refuges for those with whom nothing succeeds. But these either bear the mark of their previous profession, or are distinguished by purely individual traits, and their peculiarities of physiognomy

and character are always foreign to their present trade; they are oddities who have become bookstall-keepers, but it is not their trading in old books which has given them their stamp of individuality or the special brand which distinguishes them.

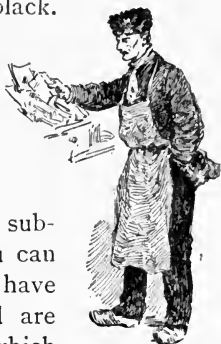
The reader, in following us through the gallery of the departed, will have already noticed that the second-hand booksellers who had books 'in the blood' were rare indeed. How much rarer are they to-day! Without hoping to find in the existing confraternity many scholars like Achaintre, the editor of Horace, we may believe that our dealers in old books, or at least the majority of them, know and appreciate their goods, take an intelligent interest in them, and, from the similarity of their occupations, derive a similarity of manners and appearance which is like the seal of the trade on the individual. The professor, the lawyer, the physician, the man who farms his own land, the soldier in mufti, are all recognisable by general resemblances. I do not speak now of the dyer's hands, the painter's blouse, the carpenter's apron, which are but the superficial indications—the signboards, so to speak—easy to efface or remove, and which do not necessarily leave a stain. The bookstall man has nothing to show his trade by. He sells books as the peripatetic optician alongside him sells spectacles, as the antiquary sells medals and little bronzes, as the naturalist sells, at a fairer price, fossil ammonites, quartz crystals, butterflies fixed on cork, vertebræ and fragments of the mandible and the tibia. There is no absolutely recognisable type.

It has more than once happened to us to discover at a certain stall some books which interested us, and to settle for them with a man of medium height, keen of sight and alert of bearing, who lost sight of no one dipping into his boxes, and invariably came up to us when we had need of

him. We thought at first that we were dealing with a bookstall man; but one day we noticed under his vest a copper badge, and resting against a neighbouring tree were the strap and box of a shoeblack.

Our stall-keeper was merely in charge of the stall while the owner was having a drink at the cabaret.

There are exceptions, such as the two or three named at the outset and in the course of this book, and who have favoured us with many substantial and well-written notes. You can find a few others who, like these, have had a good general education, and are acquainted with the merchandise in which they trade. But the ranks are not usually recruited from college graduates. Here, for example, is a stall-keeper at the corner of the Pont Royal, on the Quai d'Orsay; let us introduce him; it is Chevalier, the old waiter at the Salle Sylvestre, well known for his indisguisable ignorance and his anything but Athenian idiom. He hardly knows how to read; none the less his is one of the stalls where you will find the most books and the best books; he has already made enough money to have his investments. A little time ago his volumes remained tumbled anyhow into the sacks which strewed the ground of his store-room in the Rue Verneuil. The initiated admitted within the sanctuary emptied the sacks out on to the floor to examine their contents. 'Seek your living there!' they said to the good man, for at heart Chevalier is an excellent man, but quite incapable of doing as the rag-picker does with the refuse and detritus accumulated in his basket, for he had no notion of sampling his bones or his rags.



Marrow-bones and rags of lace are not common,

naturally; but they exist, and more than one amateur has returned, it is said, from his fishing in Chevalier's sacks with scarce volumes, for which he paid three francs apiece. Three francs, that was usually the extreme limit of Chevalier's pretensions; but on what rule did he base his scale of prices? No one has ever known. A book worth ten sous was valued by him at three francs, with as much ingenuousness as one worth a louis. And once the price was fixed it was adhered to with an obstinacy that nothing could shake. But you might wait until the coveted volume was transferred from its sack to the box on the quay, and then you had your chance, for the boxes were invariably turned over and over in disorder, and the books wandered about without reason or method from the '2 sous' box to the '2 fr. 50.' All is changed now; Chevalier's daughter has grown up and brought matters more into order. She moves about, surveys



and arranges, upright in carriage, cold in manner, but affable, conducting her business with a slight lisp, and as soon as a too would-be agreeable customer turns the conversation on another subject, saying no more, but beating a dignified retreat towards the newspaper-kiosk.

On the other side of the bridge, on the Quai Voltaire, the most remarkable stall-keeper and the most courteous is, undoubtedly, excellent M. Corroenne, the well-known bibliographer of the Cazin editions, who started on the quay in 1880. The books he has on sale he brought by the armful from the little shop which he has kept for years opposite at the sign of the Cazinophile. A short time ago he fitted up a big rectangular box with a lifting lid, the whole solidly clamped to the parapet.

He has only to shut it up in the evening and open it again in the morning; and his books are always in order. He daily reinforces them with the piles of old books with which he flanks the ends, like the exterior works protecting the outskirts of a fortress. And it would seem that the ardour of which the Cazinophilic *bouquiniste* has given so many proofs is failing him. The greatest confusion reigns in his shop, which he is about to abandon, and his boxes cannot always be praised for their order or method. M. Corroenne has brought up a numerous family respectably; the education he has given to his children does honour to his paternal devotion as well as to his good sense. This man, of military cut, an old bandsman of the Garde Républicaine, still full of vigour and energy, should not consider his mission terminated. When he has played his part as a father, is he to set free the bibliographic spring which kept him going? Perhaps he needs the stimulus of a definite duty to preserve him from that vague indifference to his old work and interests which is now apparent in him.



He is the best of men, zealous, polite, courteous, having retained the laws of harmony taught to the Garde, always precise and easy to agree with. His colleagues, alluding to his height and his love for *Cazins* in 16mo., have nicknamed him antithetically as *Grand-corps*, *Petits-formats*.

Not far from him there is on view in the afternoon a character worthy of notice, Emile Vaisset, employed every morning by Auguste Pillet. This *demi-bouquiniste* is a tall, thin, shaky man, nicknamed 'Sack of bones' by his ironic cronies of the parapets.

Next to him is Gallandre, an old railwayman who, after pushing waggons without a rest on the Saint Denis line, now pushes the little book-barrow, which must seem as light as a toy to him.

Farther on, but still on the Quai Voltaire, is a prosperous stall-keeper, tall, jovial, of sonorous voice and familiar hand, always wearing a black deerstalker hat, and pacing right and left along the quay. This is A. Rigault, the most authorised representative on the quays of the '*Revue des Buloz*,' of which he possesses fifty thousand parts in store at No. 7, Rue des Saints-Pères. He knows his *Revue* as nobody else knows it, he devotes himself entirely to it, and on the walls of his lean-to there is nothing to be seen but its salmon covers methodically arranged. Rigault also 'does' with *Bottins*. He collects them and sells them more or less dearly, according to date. He also does a little with a few current books, but

that is merely a concession and of little interest to him. The true Rigault is the *Rigault Revue*, the *Rigault Bottin*, the incomparable 'completer' of the Buloz series.



The Quai Malaquais glories in one of the first literary critics of the time, a bibliographer of the first flight. He holds his sittings in front of the Beaux Arts, and he could not be prouder before the Institute. We speak of Antoine Laporte, already mentioned in the preceding chapter. Without despising the lustre shed on him by the surroundings, he has no doubt but that he carries within himself the source of his brilliancy and his radiance. But he does not waste it, and it is not on the first buyer that comes along that he pours the flood of his luminosity. He does not commit himself but with those he believes to be

serious scholars, or amateurs of knowledge and taste. Over them only has he the honour and the pleasure to triumph—and he always triumphs. They can teach him nothing; they can prove him nothing; they cannot undeceive him. They can listen, but to contradict is out of the question. For if they argue with him he refers them to his bibliographic works they do not know; and if they are ignorant of them, how can they expect him to deign to talk to them?

Continuing our journey, we reach the stall of M. Humel. M. Humel is a Bavarian by birth, and perhaps by nationality, for we have never heard of his having been naturalized. But if he is not a Frenchman he deserves to be one, for his gallantry at least.

The stall-keepers complain from time to time that these parapets, like the aisles of a church, are used as places of rendezvous, or even of accidental meetings; we doubt if any of these complaints have the support of M. Humel, at least when he was a bachelor, and pursued his oglings and attentions to every presumably coquettish petticoat that approached his stall—and with results. But at last the conqueror was in him conquered by his last conquest, and after a prolonged absence he returned with a charming companion, whom he introduced to his neighbours and who eventually made him a father; since then M. Humel has toned down his former effusiveness into mere politenesses and complaisances which one would like to meet with everywhere. If he sees with an indulgent eye the errand-girl or the little nurse stop before his boxes and consult gratis *La Clef des Songes* or the *Secrétaire des Dames*, who would not approve of this gracious tolerance? And, in



fact, they are rare, the stall-keepers who in such a case would not shut their eyes—this is a metaphor—and avoid advancing on the reader for fear of intimidating her. And when the girl moves off at her bird's step, turning over in her little brain the formula of a letter or the explanation of a dream, rich in hope and illusion for a whole day, the stall-keeper puts the book back with a tender half-smile, placidly happy at the charity he has bestowed.

We gladly recommend this gratification, as well as every other which comes of kindness in the honest practice of a trade, to a big man whose store is in the Rue de Seine, and whose stall faces the Rue Bonaparte. An enormous red head on an apoplectic neck, a corporation like a fat doll's, his physical envelope modelled exactly, so they say, on the interior man. He is dreaded for his gross pleasantries and his brutal jokes at the sale-rooms and the Salle Sylvestre, where the auctioneers are often obliged to call him to order. He is, however, assiduous in his attendance, being one of the most active and noisy members of the 'black band.'



This singular personage need not delay us long, and as we here express an opinion which seems to be general on the quays, we do not name him, for we do not wish to give offence to any living stall-keeper nor to injure anybody. It is, however, permitted us to prefer the amusing company of M. Jacques on the Quai Conti before the Institute.

It is a pleasure to listen to M. Jacques developing his ideas as to the improvement of bookstall-keeping. This astonishing man dreams of transforming the Paris quays into a vast gallery, with awning, lighting, shelves, coun-

ters, etc. The meagre success of his many endeavours, far from discouraging him, urges him to further enterprises. He has devoted himself to the task of disembarassing society of the monopolists or modern forestallers. With this object he has published an exhilarating volume, *La Pieuvre commerciale*, which has been announced to the populace by highly comical posters, in which he took the opportunity of inviting all the traders in Paris to come to his stall and sign a double petition, demanding the destruction of the large stores and the establishment of a national fair. Unfortunately he is the victim of machinations innumerable; the capitalist pursues him with a furious hatred; the venal press fell on his book; his posters were pasted over; his petitions gained but his own signature, and were not in a fit state to be presented. But M. Jacques did not lay down his arms; he remains indomitable and threatening. 'I told them that they have me to deal with! They had better look out.' At his call they will descend into the street; he will put himself at their head. Beware, then! for Jacques knows what is meant by a Jacquerie. And in the meantime he has appointed a deputy. This worthy crank has his duplicate at the corner of the Pont Saint-Michel, whither we transport ourselves at a single bound, leaving for a moment the stall-keepers of the Quai Conti and the Quai des Grands-Augustins, for if the Norman type abounds, the bouquiniste type is not very marked.

Though both M. Jacques and Citoyen Chanmoru are revolutionists and socialists, yet they differ from each other. It is Marat by the side of Camille Desmoulins.



In the fantastic imaginings of M. Jacques there is a soaring flight unknown to the gloomy, discontented, utilitarian brain of his companion. One floats off into the realm of dreams; the other clings more to earth, applies as much of his theories as he can and makes the most of them.

In summer Citoyen Chanmoru wears a red cap and in winter a toque of otter-skin. His long yellow hair is tied up in a chignon behind his head with a white or blue ribbon. His beard is also yellow, and is worn short and bristly. His long teeth, which the grin of his two thick lips often reveals, are also yellow. This jaundiced face is pierced as by a gimlet with two holes, in which blink and quiver two little points of pale-blue, which are his eyes. In winter Citoyen Chanmoru wears sabots of white wood, muffles himself in a comforter, and over a thick overcoat puts a long blouse of very dirty coarse material.

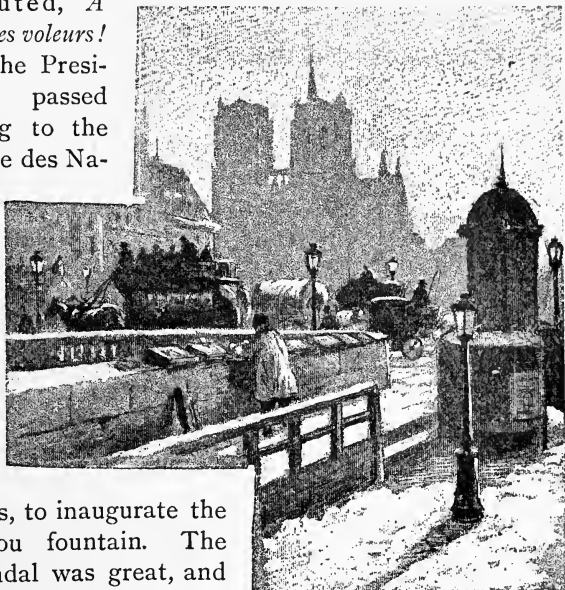


His plan of social renovation, from a bookstall point of view, consists in the establishment of a syndicate for preventing stall-keepers from selling their books at lower prices than those fixed by the committee. Every purchase should be examined and every volume priced. Any stall-keeper accused and convicted of having sold a book below the price fixed should be excluded from the parapet. Citoyen Chanmoru, whose devotion to democratic ideas and ideas of equality is not without its limits, would be quite equal to acting as the taxing committee all by himself.

Chanmoru has already been convicted of insubordination to the police in various affrays, and he likes not *la Rousse*, and his spirit revolts at seeing spies almost

everywhere. All his neighbours with whom he quarrels are in his eyes informers, placed there to keep an eye on him. Being of a dictatorial, authoritative nature, his friends find themselves in the position of having to choose between him and those he supposes to be his enemies.

In the height of the Boulangist epoch Chanmoru shouted, *A bas les voleurs!* as the President passed along to the Place des Na-



tions, to inaugurate the Dalou fountain. The scandal was great, and he was arrested. After

three days' detention he owed his dismissal to the tyrant in person, to M. Carnot, who perhaps, being a Polytechnician, had a weakness for stall-keepers and the loungers of the quays.

A few years ago Citoyen Chanmoru's stall was as curious as himself. Twenty little boxes, made and painted red by him, were arranged along the ten metres of wall to which he had to limit his strength, his demo-

cratic tendency being to take all he could get, Chanmoru being the sole unadulterated incarnation of Demos. The democrat, of whom Citoyen Chanmoru is the undeniable type, considers as aristocrats all those who possess that which he has not ; and to take from the aristocrats that which they possess is to legitimately enter into possession of his own property.

In the twenty boxes the books were systematically classified, and a label informed the customer of the kind of goods before him. No matter how miserable or dilapidated might be the volume, a written label was stuck on the back, giving the title, the date, and the price, and a string carefully knotted tied up the leaves to save them from the thumb of the curious. The difference between the marked price and the value was generally laughable, but oftenest the price asked was over instead of under. We have seen a *Bible Farce*, of Léo Taxil's, stitched, marked fifteen francs, while Trouillet was at that very moment selling them for fifty centimes a kilogramme.

Besides these innumerable little labels to guide you in your researches there were larger ones, instructing you how to hold the books, how to open them, how to shut them, and how to put them back in their places. A special placard rendered in old French requested smokers not to drop their ashes in the boxes, and prohibited schoolboys from snivelling over the books.

It was of Chanmoru that we spoke in *Le Livre* in 1880, when in the *Gazette Bibliographique* we wrote the following paragraph :

A BOOKSTALL-KEEPER.—The stall-keepers of the quay have for some time had a colleague who stands not far from the Pont Saint-Michel. The newcomer has made a specialty of journals, pamphlets, and documents

of all kinds bearing on the events of 1871. He also has a number of socialistic and revolutionary works. All these are arranged, ticketed, and classified with minute care. Our stall-keeper has a horror of disorder, and great is his indignation at seeing the profane rummaging in his boxes. For their benefit he displays these two notices :

THE BOOKSELLER DISTRESSED

AT SEEING HIS BOOKS DAMAGED WITHOUT PITY

appeals to the consideration of the Public
to handle the books as little as
possible, and only with the
intention of
BUYING.

ADVIS

AUX ESCHOLIERS ET AULTRES

Oncques ne vist-on
Au païs d'Angleterre, d'Espagne,
Voire d'Allemagne,
Les admirateurs penchés sur les boîtes
Y laisser choir
Cendres de cigares, de cigarettes,
De pipes même et brûle-gueules.
Ni laisser couler
De leurs nez roupies.
Adoncques, le pauvre bibliothéqueux,
Porant et geignant,
Invoque de tous Précaution et Mercy
Sous peine d'estre, en contraire cas,
Marrys et jetés en Seine
Comme malfaisants matous.

Nowadays a change has come over this wonderful stall. The proprietor remarked that many of his neighbours who sold only music managed to secure passable receipts. His own were greater, but he thought that by a little opposition he could reduce his neighbours' gains. He sold his little boxes and their contents, suppressed his amusing labels and notices, and made his stall look like those on either side of him. In this way he established a confusion which, if it did not profit him, at least did harm to his colleagues, and thereupon he rubs his hands and his soul rejoices. Such is this singular and amusing man.

Now that we are among the moral eccentricities of this



little world, where, on the other hand, we find so much simplicity, good nature, family virtue, modest resignation, and laborious mediocrity, we will report a conversation we had seven or eight years ago with one of the most cynical and least scrupulous of all

the bookstall-keepers who adorned the line of quays. We will not mention his name; let it suffice to say that we have already spoken of him in these pages. Those only will recognise him who have recognised him already, and any fear of injuring him with others would certainly be superfluous.

On this occasion he was as usual wearing a blouse, peculiar in shape, colour, and material. Seeing that it awoke our curiosity, he condescended to furnish us with explanations.

'Ah, you are looking at my blouse! It is curious, is it

not? I made it myself, as I did another like it I have at home. It is all that remains to me of the siege of Paris, and the stuff it is made of came from the coffee sacks supplied to my battalion when I was in the National Guard. Ah, I made a good deal of money in those days: twelve thousand francs at least! Oh, it was easy enough! My battalion was composed of a lot of dirty *bourgeois*—all big traders or manufacturers, like Menier, the chocolate-maker, for example, and other nabobs of that kidney. All these people every day distributed any quantity of provisions. We did not know what to do with them, I assure you; there were enough to make us all sick. And as there was too much, somebody might as well get something out of it, don't you think? Every time the coffee was dealt out I boned three or four sacks, which I sold for fifteen or, say, twenty francs. And the same with the chocolate. When I came down from Montrouge with a cartload of provisions, I sold half of them on the road; a bowl of rice for tenpence, and the other things in proportion. And the clothes, too—what a lot I got hold of and sold! And the fatigue duty, too; there was something to be made out of that. We squared matters with the corporals, who, being of our lot, were not too hard on us, and sent the *bourgeois* out to cut firewood in the Bois de Boulogne. Those who did not care for the Prussian bullets while gathering faggots would give us ten francs, fifteen francs, to take their places. It was a regular game—quite a spree. We went off in gangs, ten of us to bring in one faggot!

Then he thought for a moment, and concluded: 'Ah, bah! We did not make half enough money, you see, out of those pigs!'

But to return to Citizen Chanmoru, whom this digression is not too long to allow us to pick up again. He was always treating us to confidences of this nature, cynical

and amusing, regarding the petty incidents of his trade. A convinced revolutionist, an ardent socialist, a devourer of priests and skinner of the *bourgeois*—assuredly he is all that to the hilt—he is a very smart business man into the bargain. And he knows it, and likes to let others know it, while his bilious face wears a shrewd and satisfying smile.

‘In our trade,’ he will tell you in his hours of expansion, ‘you must be wide-awake and keep your eyes open. Without that, believe me, you can do nothing. You must be sharp. Look here; the other night I had the second number of *La Lune* on my stall. You know the journal has caricatures by Gill. A passer-by caught sight of it and seized upon it eagerly and delightedly. I said to myself, “My old fellow, I have got you.” “How much for this number?” he asked. “Fifteen francs.” “You know I want it?” “I have little doubt of it.” He tried



to beat me down, but I held out, and I landed him. All I regretted was that I had not asked at least double. I learnt afterwards that this citizen was engaged on a monograph on André Gill. For those people, a thing sought is priceless, is it not so? But I found that out too late. It was annoying, all the same. I lost quite a louis there. You must make the best of circumstances and do things neatly!’

After all, it is not only Citoyen Chamoru who has discovered this commercial theory, and boasts of applying it. ‘How much for this stuff?’ asked a certain clerk, ticketing a piece which had just come in. ‘From two francs fifty to ten francs, according to the stupidity and eagerness of the customer,’ replied the master. The

formula is brutal, but it expresses the hidden thought of the seller—and should it not also be said of the buyer as well? Both wish to obtain the most and give the least. It is a struggle of acuteness, in which, for evident reasons, it is the exception for the buyer, unless he buys to sell again, to have the last word.

Such is, we cannot deny it, the morality of trade, whether it be in old books, in furniture, or in jewellery. That may not be a sufficient motive for setting up Citoyen Chanmoru as a model, as was done once under the signature of Jean Frolo, by a journalist who ought to have known better.

Developing or modifying in an acceptable and practical sense the favourite idea of Chanmoru with regard to the founding of a syndicate for the welfare of the bookstall-keepers, the writer described a good time coming, in which these gentlemen would be people of importance with whom we should have to reckon. Note, in passing, that it is not necessary to be of importance for people to have to reckon with you; you need only be honestly resolved to maintain your rights. The stall-keepers, without emerging from their humble sphere, have proved this every time an attempt has been made to arbitrarily interfere with them. 'All the minor trades are going up,' said the journalist. 'Look at the shearer on the Pont des Arts; does he not clip the poodle's beard, does he not operate



on cats, and on the ears in quite an aquatic salon? If this close profession leads to luxury and respectability, what is in store for the stall-keepers, the philosophers of the quays, who read and observe, and who in urbanity and good manners would already give points to certain illustrious booksellers of the region of the boulevards?’

To arrive there, Jean Frollo must assuredly have forgotten his point of departure. Citoyen Chanmoru can hardly be cited as a paragon of sweetness and courtesy. But it is natural enough that his eccentricity would lead one to think of the usual virtues, and we do not reproach our journalist for having complimented all the tenants of the quays for the qualities which distinguish most of them. And inasmuch as he sets us an example, let us cross the roads and pass from one path to another without crying Beware! and exceeding the limits of our title; and let us traverse the bridges rather than lose sight of a type curious and unique, I believe, in the annals of bookstall-keeping.



One fine day on the parapet of the right bank, opposite the old Louvre—a spot up to then unsullied by old books—there arose a sort of long lean-to, sheltering boxes full of books, and at the same time offering a refuge to the curious—the realization of the little dream of M. Jacques, barring the lighting and the luxury of the installation. It was an old officer of the law courts who had started as a stall-keeper and taken possession. The passers-by found the lean-to impeded the traffic on the quay, and complained; the stall-keepers on the left bank, alarmed at an opposition which might destroy the species of monopoly which assured their being all of a line on the quays, also protested with the

vigorous conviction that is always inspired by a menaced interest. The ex-huissier had no other right than that of the first-comer. No one had dreamt of refusing him permission to establish himself on the spot, for, enemy of the bureaucracy, the new stall-keeper had not even asked permission. He was invited to remove his planks; he paid no attention to the demand.

He was given a certain amount of notice, of which he did not avail himself. At last the Administration, having exhausted both patience and argument, demolished the stall *manu militari*. Thereupon, always in virtue of the rights of man and of the citizen, the ex-huissier continued his exploits, and transported himself to the Quai du Canal Saint-Martin, to again set up his monument of initiative and liberty. But he did not abandon the Quai du Louvre: there he maintained for a length of over thirty metres forty-two boxes remarkably well filled. We



recently bought there for a reasonable price a good example with the margins intact of the *Premières Œuvres de Philippe Des-Portes*, Paris, Mamert-Patisson, 1600, in old binding, with many flourishes and much gilding on the corner plates; beneath the title were these words, written in ink: 'Don de l'auteur.' The copy bore the book-plate of Antoine Chevalier, canon of Paris, 1650, the book-plate being a long escutcheon with these words inscribed: *Ad usum perpetuum Congregationis Sacerdotum Montis Valeriani*, 1730.

If anything we can offer here can contribute towards the disenchantment of the right bank, we shall have wasted neither time nor words. That long desert of

quays along the Pavillon de Flore and the Louvre would be animated by a picturesque, useful life if the stall-keepers could take up their quarters there and find the locality profitable enough at the outset. A man of enterprise and audacity has recently placed his boxes at the end of the Pont Royal near the steamboat steps, facing on the other side of the Seine the stall of Chevalier. He is polite and agreeable, and has a few books among which, according to our taste and plans, we may sometimes find a few good old samples at reasonable prices. We wish him all success in his attempt, and we shall not be [out of touch of the levelling spirit of the age in demanding for the parapets of the right bank, as for those of the left, as noble a crest of well-furnished book-boxes.



Before we finish we cannot—although it may be outside our limit—avoid mention of a pious remembrance of the old stall-keeper of whom Schanne speaks in his *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, who spread out his stall on the parapet of the Pont Marie and the Quai des Ormes.

‘He allowed the passers-by to read at a sou the sitting, and provided them with a chair,’ when the customer did not prefer to sit on the parapet. The only reader to whom he ever gave credit was Hégésippe Moreau, the sickly face of the poet having evoked his pity. On the contrary, Mürger would never, in spite of the generous resistance of Schaunard, accept a seat for a reading in this ‘cabinet of wet feet.’ Schanne does not tell us, perhaps he did not know, the name of this worthy man who gave alms to poetry. Bibliophile Jacob knew him, without doubt, he who knew all the good people of all the quays and

all the bridges. But he also has departed, and the benevolent creditor of Hégésippe Moreau will probably remain anonymous. When the weather suits and we are at leisure on our return from England or Italy, we will make a pilgrimage to the Quai des Ormes. The books are there still if the stall-keeper has disappeared. We will talk to his successor, and he will tell us his name. But life is short, and the way to the Quai des Ormes is long!

When we have spoken of the three stall-keepers who have been delegated by their colleagues to arrange the conditions of the Marmier banquet, we shall have said all that is necessary of the stall-keepers of the day. Besides Corroenne, already mentioned, representing the Quai Voltaire, the delegates were: for the Quai Malaquais, Dubosq (nephew); Lefournier, successor to Père Malorey, for the Quai Conti; and lastly, for the Quai Malaquais, M. Ferroud, a modest Savoyard, amiable and unpretentious, qualities which cast a doubt on his relationship to the bookseller in the Boulevard Saint Germain, a man quite out of the ordinary, in regard to his Southern self-satisfied fluency, who is always being astonished at his commercial genius and boasting of his luck in the book trade, and the masterpieces he has had to do with, and who, good fellow as he is after all, is very much alive in his starry dreams.

A genuine character is this Savoyard Gascon, whom it is amusing to meet with in this gallery of the quays.

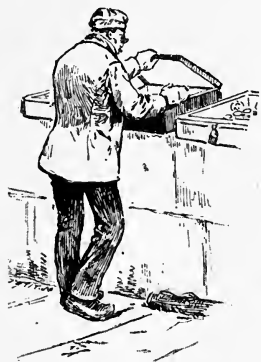
We must not forget Père Rosselin, the man in the



blouse and blue spectacles, the oldest of contemporary stall-keepers, who already figures among our stall-keepers of the old sort in our preceding chapter.

We have advisedly said nothing up to now regarding the different stall-keepers who sell medals and spectacles and bronzes and account-books, nor of those who deal specially in prints or songs. Not that these dealers are uninteresting and undeserving of notice, but, as the Auvergnat says, 'That can keep its place,' and to say

anything of them would take several pages at least. The dealer in spectacles and optical instruments on the Quai Malaquais is enough of a character to merit a slight sketch to himself, as also is the medallist who reigns a little higher up by the side of the Hôtel de la Monnaie; but old books have nothing to do with them. That is why we prefer, in conclusion, not to omit to call up the picturesque figure of the worthy A.



Tisserand, maker of pasteboard, paper boxes and other such cases with fastenings of indiarubber, strings, and buckles.

A stall-keeper on the Quai Malaquais facing the Beaux Arts, Tisserand has never been away from his dear boxes except he was on the great boulevards looking after customers who ignore the pleasant promenades of the quays.

His stall is always clean and striking; it would be difficult to find a larger or more brilliant profusion of cards and cases of various designs, richly covered in brown leathers, some from Japan, books for drawing, for copying, for notes, of all colours and all sizes and

qualities, with cloth corners and most ingenious india-rubber angles. For eleven years Tisserand has been known on the quays by the artists of the Beaux Arts, the students, the bibliographers, and the collectors. And so we salute him as we pass in this gallery of our stall-keepers of the day, although to our minds it may still be incomplete.

Many are those of whom we have not spoken, our endeavours being to offer only types of some originality, for we did not at the commencement of this chapter intend to produce a *Bottin des Bouquinistes*.

PAUCI SED ELECTI has been our motto.





BOOK-HUNTERS AND BOOK-HUNTRESSES.

CHARACTERS AND FACES.



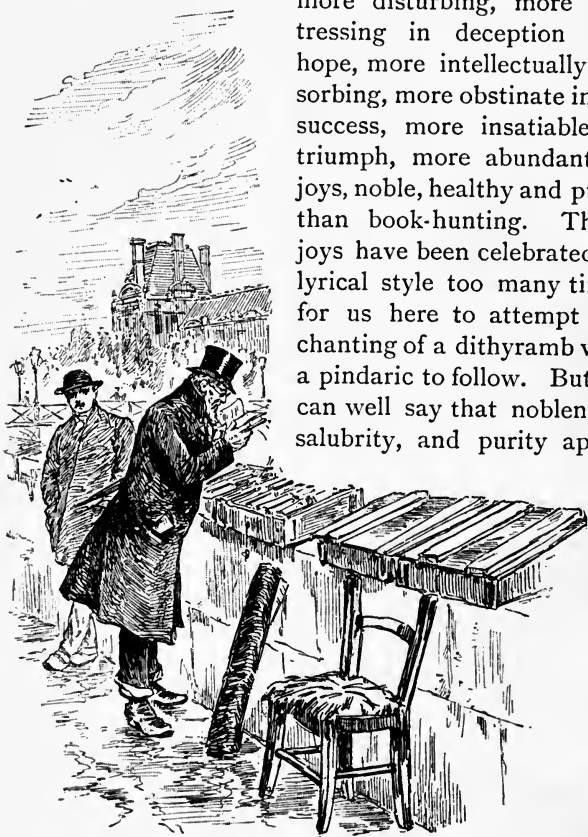
LET us begin with 'The chase is the image of war,' which is one of those phrases that many honest people repeat as opportunity offers without scruple or remorse, and which, all things considered, are of the greatest service to the community—for they fill the place of absent ideas, and give those who have nothing to say something to talk about. To beat the fields at the heels of a dog who scents a quail, to crouch in a thicket to shoot rabbits at their toilet, have, however, but a very distant resemblance to the throwing out of skirmishers or the charge with cold steel. The noble pastime of hunting the hare even, although imperfectly understood, as our soldiers understand European and colonial strategy, will hardly do,

notwithstanding the furiously excited hunters, who would make a pitiful appearance under a colonel's *képi*. At most, experience in hunting the badger might be of some assistance at a time when illustrious warriors smoke out innocent and fatalistic Arabs, like pigs, in their huts.

But if the chase has analogies less and less close to that which our gallant ancestors called the sport of Mars, it at least takes so many forms as to steal into the heart of man and become its master. There is no passion more subtle, more insinuating, more insatiable, and more universal. We all have within us the germ of a Nimrod, which often develops in an unexpected way. A friend, and a dear one, professes a sovereign contempt for the pursuit of game, which he cares for only as a dish, duly high and cooked to perfection. But he scours the fields, skirts the hedges and ditches, loses himself in the woods in search of dreams, landscapes and—fungi. He trespasses, clambers over walls, jumps over streams in quest of moussérans, boletuses, and agarics, and for views of smiling pasturages and shady groves quivering against the sky. Full well he knows the spots where the good cryptogams grow, hidden in the grass or beneath the leaves; he scents them before he sees them, and from afar he distinguishes them, recognising them by their general aspect and, when near, by their colour, lest under the false appearance of an attractive comestible some cryptogamic hypocrite conceals a mortal poison. The mineralogist and his hammer, the botanist and his vasculum, the entomologist with his pins and net, may be scientists, but they are certainly hunters. And those who run after fortune in the hours when it would be healthier for them to wait for it in bed—the frequenters of the gaming-table, for example—what are they but hunters after chance? Lovers are but hunters after woman; actors, but hunters after success; misers, but

hunters after gold; policemen, but hunters after men. Are we not all, in a word, in chase of excitement?

Well, of all these impassioned pursuits, there is none more disturbing, more distressing in deception and hope, more intellectually absorbing, more obstinate in ill-success, more insatiable in triumph, more abundant in joys, noble, healthy and pure, than book-hunting. These joys have been celebrated in lyrical style too many times for us here to attempt the chanting of a dithyramb with a pindaric to follow. But we can well say that nobleness, salubrity, and purity apart,



the joys of the book-hunter yield to none in variety and intensity. The mere physical pleasure is not entirely absent; to turn over the pages of a book long coveted, to handle an unexpected find, to fondle a binding, to

dust the edges, are exquisite joys in which the hand shares with the eye. The book-hunter who hugs under his arm a book recently acquired experiences the ecstasy and pride of possession. We pass in silence the pleasures of the really intellectual kind ; they are in proportion, not to the merits of the book, but, principally, to the brain of the hunter.

For centuries, as is made manifest in the brief digressions of our historic prolegomena, the quays have been the favourite resort of these hunters of keen and subtle scent and ardent blood. Undoubtedly, like all hunting-grounds, the prey has not increased with time ; the finer specimens have disappeared, and with rare exceptions there are more sparrows than partridges among the remainder. This phenomenon of depopulation and the extinction of species is due to many causes, to which we can return farther on. In 1866 M. Johannis Guigard pointed out one, in an article in the *Bibliophile Français*, entitled ' Les Boîtes à quatre sols.* ' ' Nowadays,' he says, ' every well-informed book-stall-keeper is armed with his Brunet, his Quérard and his Barbier. The smallest volume, the most trivial booklet, the slightest leaflet, is known ; its money value is noted in the catalogues.' And he adds, with reason, ' It is quite disheartening.'

Nevertheless, it is never good to despair. In fact, if it is not possible now to find in the twopenny boxes of the quays the rare and precious books that the excellent, but perhaps fallacious, Fontaine de Resbecq pretended to have found there, it is not unusual to exhume from these boxes and others—for the ' quatre sols ' must be taken as a literary generalization—curious things, uncommon, endowed with all the qualities, without even excepting the low price, which content a collector.

* Fifty copies printed separately. Paris, Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1866, 8vo.

The good and charming Banville was pleased to introduce to the public which enjoyed his chronicles a great poet, young and poor, who lunched when he could, and formed a library of all the masterpieces of all the literatures by judicious and repeated acquisitions from the humble penny box. There we have M. de Resbecq outdone. It is true that he did not buy first editions or rare copies. But, at least, in the character described by the worthy Banville, there is no exaggeration beyond the indefinable breath of poetry, by which, fortunately, the real is transfigured into the ideal.



A stall-keeper who has put at our service his experiences of life on the quays, divides the book-hunters into three groups: First, the constant ones, who never miss their daily walk before the boxes, any more than a *Chasseur d'Afrique* in garrison misses his absinthe before dinner; secondly, the irregulars, whom occupations and distant homes, besides their

habits, keep away, but who, when chance brings them on the quays, experience a pleasure as great as it is rare and brief, in a rapid examination of the stalls; thirdly, the mere passers-by, from whom so many books all of a row secure a glance, careless at first, then interested, and then awaking in them a temptation to buy.

It is for these, more than all, that the dealer in old books displays all the resources and acuteness of the stall-keeper. To set out a stall well is psychology in action—nothing less. In this sort of thing he must not only be acquainted with the differences in the social posi-

tion and standard of education of the persons who daily pass along the quays, but know also their turn of mind and their state of inclination. New volumes in brilliant yellow covers, still fresh, well furnished with pages and compact in text, will attract the sentimental work-girls, the cooks, the small employers, and other successors of the rustics of Boileau—'great readers of romances.' The favourite books have sensational titles, with picture covers, which are laid on their sides, pleasantly breaking the monotony of the files of yellow-backs, and making the whole display more attractive.



La Clef des Songes, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, *Le Secrétaire des Amants*, *L'Oracle des Dames*, in new and popular editions, in bindings glowing in gaudy colours, are sure to sell. Errand boys, gutter boys, bakers' boys, nurses, and soldiers, loiter before them, and unless the volume is already cut, and they can consult it easily on the spot, often feel in the bottom of their pocket for a few sous to buy it with. *La Cuisinière bourgeois* has attractive virtues for quiet housewives which they would not be wise to neglect. Out-of-date editions of *La Harpe*, *Buffon*, *L'Encyclopédie*, the works of *Voltaire*, of *Jean Jacques Rousseau*, undoubtedly still excite the ambition of the incorruptible *Joseph Prudhomme*, who dreams of fur-



nishing with a solemn library the expanse of wall-space in his dining-room, to balance some monumental side-board, or who contemplates a useful present to his offspring when he leaves college. That is their ultimate fate.

The red-and-blue bindings glittering with gold fascinate the little boys and girls who, clinging with their little hands, bring along their papas and mammas, whose resistance to making them happy is usually of the slightest if only they promise some day to be wiser. And they

are equally attractive to the pastry-cook, the hobbledehoy, and the worthy little telegraphists, who are always so eager not to take to their addresses their little blue envelopes.



A few illustrated books, open at a striking picture, in addition to some old volumes in their original parchment covers, and a few art publications, are thrown out as scouts to catch the eye of the scholar, the artist, the man of the world, who by chance passes by. It

has happened to many to be thus arrested on their way by an interesting book, to conceive a taste for book-hunting, and become in consequence quite assiduous customers.

If the stall-keeper has any special parcels, on law for instance, or on any particular science, he generally stands all these books together, thus facilitating exploration and saving the time of the visitor, besides multiplying his chances of sale.

Books of piety, imitations, psalters, catechisms, hours, offices, breviaries, religious gift-books, meditations, and prayers, have also a box to themselves. The ecclesi-

astical professor desirous of rewarding a good pupil, the economical mamma seeking a First Communion book for her daughter, the husband who, having promised his wife a Prayer-book, is not sorry to keep his word at a discount of sixty per cent., the seminary, the good sister, the pious old maid, the priest on a journey, who can only renew his breviary on the cheap, find here what they want.

So it is with classical books. The dealer arranges them in classes—grammars, mathematics, Greek authors, Latin authors, German authors, English authors. A few stall-keepers make a specialty of this kind

of thing, particularly in the neighbourhood of the Place Saint-Michel. It is in their box that the student forages in search of a 'juxtalinear' or a Key; the poor usher or exhibitor, who consults the learned editions in the libraries, but wants to have at hand the texts prescribed in the examination programmes; the father of the family, whose sons are growing up and costing more, and who strives with heroism to maintain the unstable equilibrium of his budget; the head of the institution or the professor unattached, who undertakes to provide their pupils with books, and endeavours with ingenuity to make a profit out of the supply. It is a periodical flow of customers, changing, renewable, mixed and amusing, but always the same, in type, in pecuniary resources, and in wants.

The ladies who have occasion to pass along the quays—in small numbers, however, for they cross the quays,



and do not walk along them—are glad to give a glance at the stalls, and do not disdain to touch the books with the tips of their gloved fingers. The stall-keepers do not like them much. They complain of the way in which



they hold the books in one hand, of their opening them badly ; of their never putting them back in their places ; of their turning over their leaves for a long time before deciding to buy, and if by chance they want one, they try to bargain for it as if it were a lobster or a fowl. They ask for information on all sorts of subjects which have nothing to do with the matter on hand, make utterly amazing reflections, and ask the most preposterous questions.

We heard one of them, pointing to the dilapidated volume of a novel published a long time ago by Bossange, ask the dealer if he could get her the second volume as soon as it appeared. Another would insist on obtaining the last volume but one of the *Journal des Demoiselles*. A lady of a certain age, most serious in dress and deportment, descended from her carriage to walk a little on the quay, followed by her man-servant, and, seeing a copy of *Au Bonheur des Dames* in a box, asked the stall-keeper if he had the same work by M. Georges Ohnet. He did not have it ; she deeply regretted the fact, and majestically got into her carriage, while the worthy man bowed very low to hide his overpowering hilarity.

The dealers are not all of this easy jovial humour. There are growlers, surly fellows, frank misogynists amongst them, who take no pains to hide from the ladies when opportunity offers the little they care for them and

their annoyance. They walk on their heels, they jostle against them as they pass, they plant themselves squarely before them, they stick out an anything but elegant arm right under their noses to replace or displace the volume they have just opened, accompanying their unequivocal gestures with half-audible remarks, not at all flattering, and occasionally abominably rude.

And here it may be as well to remark, to be just to all, that certain stall-keepers have a jealousy of order which they would do well to moderate. An amateur may not have finished investigating a box in which he has not looked at a book which he has not carefully put back in its place, when the dealer is at his side, picking out the volumes, dusting them with his sleeve, and arranging them in a new way as if to purify them from contamination. The proceeding may be exceedingly clever ; but it is, to say the least, rather confusing, and uselessly vexatious.

Since our learned ladies left the theatre to invade society, the army of book-huntresses has been augmented by a new type, of which the principal representatives are the student and the lady lecturer. Of her who has passed her examinations, secured her diplomas, and gained a chair in some college for girls, we say nothing ; she only appears on the quays at long intervals, and is willingly mistaken for the terrible blue-stocking ; as one so is the other, the angularity and pedantry increasing



with age ; both run quickly and easily enough through a book at a stall, monopolizing the box against which they have installed themselves, even taking notes for their lecture, then throwing the book negligently away and always moving off without buying anything, a proceeding embarrassing, but ingenious and convenient.



The student or candidate attending lectures and living in the Quartier Latin, is more frequently met with. She has already the manners of her elders, and has even fewer scruples in seeking her own advantage. She comes to find the answer to a question, to study a problem, to learn a formula, to seek a definition. She gains her end, and troubles herself little about other people when she is looking after herself. She would buy if she had the money, for she likes books ; but money she has none. Then

what would you have her do, except avail herself of the facilities afforded by the stalls ? And these she uses until she abuses them. From that point to slipping a useful

book into her pocket or under her cloak is, to feminine logic, but a distance relatively small, and some of these ladies boldly take the step. We shall find them again in the chapter specially devoted to the book-stealers. Others—for there are exceptions—take a middle course to obtain as a gift what they cannot pay for, and endeavour to practise on the gallantry of their neighbour. In a little book of practical and familiar morals we met with a characteristic anecdote on this subject of book-lifting.

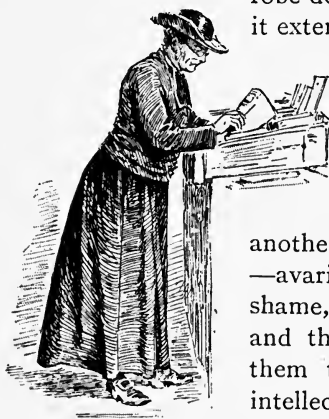
‘One day in June,’ says the author, our friend B.-H. Gausseron, ‘I was prying into the boxes of the second-hand booksellers along the quays. I soon noticed the persistent presence of a young woman, who, sometimes passing me, and sometimes letting me pass her, was running through with a feverish hand the same boxes as myself. She called the stall-keeper. “Have you Blank’s Geometry and Blank’s Physics?” naming two authors of manuals for the examination at the Hôtel de Ville, who, illustrious as they might be among our young students, are quite unknown to me. The man shook his head and moved away. “I like that!” continued the girl in a loud voice, turning to me; “I have not a sou to buy them. I shall not be ready for my examination. Such is life!” I interrogated her. She was in a boarding-school at Billancourt, sub-mistress “au pair”; that is to say, in exchange for board and lodging. She had not her certificate, for she was still too young, and yet it was necessary for her to have it to improve her position. But she was too far away, and too much occupied to attend the public lectures, and she had no money to buy books. All she could do was to find somebody who would help her out of her difficulty. For the moment she was going to a friend who was in furnished apartments in the Rue Sèvres, a few yards off, where she was as if at home, and where she spent the afternoon when she was off duty on Sundays

and Thursdays. I bowed gravely, and remarked that the afternoon was already far advanced, and that she would have to hurry. For a moment her eyes wore a strange look, a slight fugitive blush mounted to her eyelids, and she sprang into the road to disappear almost immediately under the gateways of the Institute, like a frigate on a cruise, which always appears as if towing a prize.*

We may here, in the manner of Balzac, place an affirmative axiom, or rather an absolute aphorism:

The woman of fashion never goes book-hunting.

The aversion which the bookstall-man has for the robe does not stop at the woman; it extends to the priest. According



to him, they are meddlers suffering simultaneously from desire and scruple. If any profane book tempts them, they save their soul from this demon by appealing to

another demon still more crooked—avarice. They bargain without shame, offering a ridiculous price, and thus making it impossible for them to sin by concupiscence of intellect. Probably they do not increase their credit in the great book of Paradise; for they are the tor-

ment of all dealers—at least the dealers say so.

As to those who dream not of acquisitions that would bring a blush to their cassocks, it is occasionally possible to do business with them, the books they choose being generally 'nightingales' that the stall-keeper is always glad to send to sing in another cage at any price, such as

* B.-H. Gausseron. *Que faire de nos filles?* Paris: Librairie illustrée, 1 vol., 18mo.

certain books quoted in *Gallia christiana*, very pleasing to part with.

Among the casual customers, the gentleman well dressed and decorated is particularly formidable. No one disputes with more vigour and less reason the price of a book than the correct gentleman, who brings a louis out of a purse loaded with gold and silver,



and hence this aphorism, which none can deny:—among book-hunters those who make the most rattle have the most cash.

The 'irregulars' are, for the most part, Government functionaries, clerks, and occasionally wealthy bibliophiles struck with a fleeting desire to undertake for themselves the task of skimming the cream, which some bookseller in the passages or on the boulevards has, as a rule, the custom and the commission of doing for them.

They try their hands at everything—prints, music, plays, current literature, technical studies, works on the fine arts, old editions of classic authors, early printed books, and books of gallantry. The round of the quays is quite a holiday for them. They turn the books over, finger them, handle them, ogle them, and enjoy themselves to their heart's content. They are never without hope of lighting upon the extraordinary, such as an Elzevir, thumbed or cut down, a Sambix, a Marteau, something marked with the sphere or the anchor of the Aldine Dauphins, or the tree of the Estiennes, a Gryphe, a Plantin, a Cazin, questionable or defective, a Cramoisy quarto, or a Barbin duodecimo. Every symptom of the day before yesterday's book mania is theirs, to trouble them, to excite them, and to lead them to buy largely.

But if they have old tastes they have old traditions.



They are hard at a bargain, and begin by offering the dealer half what he asks, and only meeting him sou by sou, stingy and haggling without shame, convinced that they will be robbed if they give a hundred sous for what they would pay a big bookseller a louis for without the least demur.

These are valuable customers, for they bring into circulation many books which without them would remain undisturbed at the bottom of the boxes.

And yet the bookstall-man does not like them, and always complains of them. This may be owing to their disappointment in having to abate the hopes which every dealer naturally conceives at the appreciation of a new customer. The amateur, who after all knows his business, would not come there if he were not in search of a bargain, and as the dealer is always more anxious to sell than the

patron to buy, it is inevitable that he should be the first to give way, much as he may growl at having to do so.

It is in the regular class that the types are more marked; among them it is that we can most easily pick out and study our originals. The assiduous book-hunter, such as was formerly met with, never spending a day without a visit to the boxes at about the same hour, is becoming rarer and rarer. Modern life, overheated and overdriven, with difficulty admits of regular periodic leisure. One is not often free, and it is very difficult to be for two or three days together in the same place at the same hour. Again, the bibliophile or bibliomaniac who collects in one particular line, the man of study who seeks materials and documents, resents the invasion of the *bouquinaille*—that is to say, modern books of no value or interest, which every day drift into the boxes in greater numbers. These men come only at long intervals, knowing that older books are not often reinforced on the parapets, and that one visit a week is quite enough to keep them up to date with new arrivals. They are sure to put in an appearance the day after some large sale of a bookseller's stock or a private collection, hoping to find at one or other of the stalls a few substantial wrecks, some choice lots which they overhaul with a joy all the greater from their having so few opportunities to display it. But for these windfalls how many times have they to linger sorrowfully along the river bank, like herons with their neck in, who are not in a position to despise a snail when there is nothing within range of their appetite.



And this leads to a state of things which we may describe as synallagmatic. The hunters make their visits rarer on account of the rarity of the books it is worth their while to trouble about ; the dealers hesitate to show the best things they get at the sales, the interesting bargains that occasionally fall to them, on account of the rarity of the hunters' visits. Many used to be the stall-keepers who, when chance sent them good books, were eager to lay them in special boxes to attract the attention of some particular buyer, whom they knew well, and on whose visit they could depend. But this regularity no longer exists, and disappointment has soured most of the dealers. The books lie about, get covered with dust, shrivelled up in the sun, are thumbed and dog's-eared by the passers-by, and when the connoisseur comes at last and sees their deplorable state, he will have nothing to do with them. It is not to be wondered at that under these circumstances the stall-keeper generally leaves these books in his store-room, to which the higher-class booksellers have long since learnt the way. It is there in the morning that the pick of the basket is generally parted with.

More and more is it becoming the custom for the bibliophile to hunt at home, and there, by the fireside, run through the catalogues of the booksellers ; and the stall-keeper, not caring for a book which will only be asked for when he cannot get his price, sinks to a mere seller of 'nightingales' and the current rubbish of literature.

And yet the evil is neither universal nor beyond remedy. There are always large quantities of old books on the quays, and there remain a good number of intelligent men who, besides the mere pleasure of the search, know how to find enough to make them feel that they have not lost their time.

The tradition has not been broken, and the bibliophiles of to-day, like their predecessors, do not despise, although they may enjoy it less, an afternoon stroll along the boxes, whence it is the exception for them not to extract a few volumes, not very precious undoubtedly, but of a kind to be of use in their studies, if not acquisitions to their collections.

It was in thinking of these that Amédée Pommier, in *Paris*, a humorous publication, perpetrated the following shockingly bad verses on the stall-keepers of his time; that is, about 1865 :

‘ En dehors des bibliothèques,
Il a les parapets des quais,
Où souvent d’élégants keepsakes,
De crasseux bouquins sont flanqués.
Féru de la bibliomanie,
Malgré sa poche peu garnie,
A son aise, il prend, il manie
Tous ces volumes de hasard.
Il ouvre et lit même en cachette
Tel livre édité par Hachette,
Eh bien que jamais il n’achète
De nous autres il prend sa part.’

Even in the present day we find the stall-keepers of the quays have had as their tributaries all the men who have loved books, or have known how to make the best of them — Charles Nodier, Jules Janin, Sainte-Beuve, Gustave Planche, who sold more than he bought, Mürger, Colline, the two Nisards, Asselineau, and finally Hippolyte Rigault, who wrote these lines to move the hearts of all the frequenters of the quays :

‘ The love of old books, unassuming, badly bound, bought for little and sold for nothing, is a real passion, sincere, with nothing artificial about it, into which neither calculation nor affection enters. It is a healthy feeling, this culture of the mind, this touching respect for the

most dilapidated monuments of human thought; it is a healthy feeling, this veneration for the books of former days, which our fathers knew, and which perhaps were their friends and confidants. You count your captives with the air of a conqueror, you range them one by one on humble shelves; they are loved, fondled, made much of, in spite of their poverty, as if they were clothed in gold and silk.'



While there are people who think like this the stalls on the parapets will be in no want of buyers. It is for them, with their minds cultivated and refined, their hearts ingenuous and subtle, that 'the Quai Voltaire is a veritable museum in the full sunshine,' along which

'On bouquine. On revoit sous la poudre des temps
Tous les chers oubliés; et parfois, ô surprise!
Le volume de vers que l'on fit à vingt ans !'*

One of these friends of old books, who was also a friend of the stall-keepers, for all those who met him loved him, has left along the quays, and even beyond the Pont Saint-Michel, many a regret of which tradition will assuredly temper the remembrance. In this portrait which a poet has traced nepotically in his *Rimes Bouquinières*† will be recognised Bibliophile Jacob.

'Il s'en va l'œil au guet, comme un bon chien de chasse,
Le long des quais Conti, Voltaire et Malaquais,
Flairant tous les bouquins, inspectant les paquets
De livres noirs, poudreux et mordorés de crasse.

* Gabriel Marc, *Sonnets Parisiens*.

† Maurice du Seigneur, *Le Conseiller du Bibliophile*, 1876.

‘ Il a de beaux cheveux bouclés et l’air bonasse ;
Des auteurs vieux et neufs il sait les sobriquets,
Mais préfère Restif et les minois coquets
Des Fanchettes pieds fins aux muses du Parnasse.

‘ Il est des Amateurs un des plus compétents,
Un des plus vieux peut-être : on dit qu’il a cent ans—
On croit qu’il en a vingt quand on voit comme il file.

‘ Il a fait des romans, des vers, plus d’un journal,
Son cerveau de science est tout un arsenal ;
C’est notre maître à tous c’est le *Bibliophile*.’

Just before his death, Paul Lacroix showed us, in his store-room in the Arsenal, where he accumulated his private library, bundles of books still tied up, his last harvest brought home the night before by the dealers from whose stalls he had gathered it, and which lay on the floor until he had leisure to examine and classify it. We may fairly suppose that these books remained untouched as we saw them, and their sellers bought them back at the Bibliophile’s sale tied up in the same string as they had sent them home. But the stall-keepers have never found a buyer to adequately fill the place left vacant by Bibliophile Jacob. He possessed the most astonishing collection of the romances of the eighteenth century and of the Imperial period, and he never ceased to add to it. These duodecimos clothed in dirty calf, in greasy sheepskin, or in gray paper boards, were only sought by him ; his disappearance has deprived them of all value. He also bought collections of the literary journals of the first half of this century ; and therein he was wise, for they are mines inexhaustible, and almost unworked by the bibliographer and the man of curiosity. Be it as it may, we do not imagine that he will have a successor in the search of these documents, in which the rubbish is mixed with the useful in very unequal proportions, and which take up a considerable amount of room.

Among the picturesque book-hunters we have known during the last twelve or fifteen years, was one curious character of singular appearance, who collected engravings, and who on account of his wide-



brimmed felt hat and his large collar turned down in the fashion of the sixteenth century was known by the stall-keepers as *Père Rembrandt*; he was always on the quay buying eagerly and busily. What has become of this eccentric who was the joy of our eyes?

It is impossible for us not to bestow a greeting on the memory of the great book-hunters now gone, who have been celebrated for more than half a century, and whose re-

nown has extended to our own day, such as the famous Parisian called, with good cause, the *Roi des bouquineurs*. He it was who one day found on the quay for nineteen sous an edition of *Julius Cæsar*, by Plantin (1570, 8vo.), ending with a portrait of that emperor, and bearing the unmistakable autograph of Montaigne. This book was sold for 1,500 francs. A splendid windfall!

Among other valued book-hunters were Chardon and La Rochette, Van Praet, Alexandre Barbier, the Marquis de Méjanès, Heber Tenurb, Quatremère, and beyond all M. C.-M. Pillet, who carried the rage for old books to such an excess that he deprived himself of food and clothing to be able to spend all he had on the disinherited of the quays. He amassed until he died so many books that his lodgings began to give way, and, according to his last wishes, it was necessary, in taking his collection to the Jesuits of Chambéry, to load the many-horsed vehicles again and again, the number of his books being incalculable.

And Boulard ! Boulard, the greatest buyer of old books this century has seen ; Boulard, the old notary whose face and memory are unforgettable. He was the most thorough-going of bibliomaniacs. He bought books by the metre, by the toise, by the acre ! He bought in detail, in block, by the basket, by the heap ; his drawing-room, his vestibules, his lumber-rooms, his stairs, his bedrooms, his cupboards bent under the weight of his volumes to such an extent that a witty bibliophile, who signs himself ' C.-H.-J., ' produced on the morning of his death a piece of verse worthy of surviving its author, and which we have here :

' Feu Boulard possédait au faubourg Saint-Germain
Un hôtel confortable et d'un produit honnête,
Qu'il laissait en mourant comblé jusques au faite
De livres au hasard acquis de toute main.

' Notre homme le matin commençait sa tournée
Et rapportait chez lui, plusieurs fois la journée,
Les produits de sa chasse empilés sous son bras,
Dans ses poches exprès faites pour cet usage ;
Gouffres traditionnels où les plus gros formats,
Les massifs in-quarto trouveraient leur passage.
Bientôt il eut rempli tout le premier étage
De ses hôtes poudreux : salle à manger, salons ;
Cabinets, corridors, regorgeaient de rayons ;
Il fallut émigrer plus haut : le locataire
Du second eut congé. Notre propriétaire,
Fut à peine installé dans son nouveau logis
Qu'il était encombré de nouveaux favoris.
Pendant six mois, réduit à la portion congrue
Maître Boulard, à moins de coucher dans la rue,
N'avait pu lâcher bride à son goût encombrant ;
Désormais possesseur d'un vaste appartement,
En homme qui s'était privé du nécessaire,
Plein d'une ardeur nouvelle il se donna carrière.
Il nettoya les quais, dépouilla les auvents,
Mit l'épicier à sec. Bref, au bout de trois ans,
Il fermait le second et montait au troisième.

Rien ne troublait la paix de sa maison : lui-même
 Du calme sanctuaire hôte silencieux,
 Avec recueillement il adorait ses dieux.
 Dans ce temple rempli et innombrables fétiches,
 L'araignée ourdissait les toiles les plus riches ;
 Les mites effrangeaient les tentures ; les rats
 Y mettaient le couvert pour leurs quatre repas.
 Leur riche pourvoyeur, amphitryon aimable,
 Ne leur disputait pas les restes de sa table.
 L'âge n'avait en rien apaisé ses ardeurs ;
 Trente mille bouquins peuplaient sa nécropole ;
 S'il eût fallu payer à Caron son obole,
 Il eût cédé la place à cet envahisseur,
 Et faute d'un réduit à son heure dernière,
 Il eût enfin rendu l'âme dans la gouttière.'

The bibliophile-poet finishes his work in the following exquisite fashion :

'Tel bijou, qui n'était chez Boulard qu'un bouquin,
 Aujourd'hui par mes soins, vêtu de maroquin,
 Triomphe au premier rang dans ma petite église.
Pauci sed electi, telle est notre devise ;
 Mais ces amis de choix, pendant plus de vingt ans
 Ont flotté sur les quais, battu des quatre vents,
 Avant qu'on leur ouvrît nos petites chapelles ;
 Bien des cœurs étaient sourds, bien des esprits rebelles !
 L'héroïque vieillard, en ces jours de langueur,
 Dédaignant noblement les critiques frivoles,
 Ouvrit son panthéon à nos chères idoles
 Et pour nous le sauver se fit conservateur.'

It was not 30,000 volumes which Boulard collected, but 300,000. Nodier called him the Venerable Boulard. Out of curiosity we bought his catalogue, which, although printed in small type, is immense.

Boulard (Antoine-Marie-Henri) died at Paris, on the 6th of May, 1825, aged seventy-one; he translated from English several works which, however, are given in Quérard. This bibliomaniac was a scholar. Thanks to his voracious book-collecting his name will live for ever.

The big buyers by the bundle are still frequent on the quays, and the stall-keepers delight in meeting with enthusiasts of encyclopædic passion, whose hobby embraces a whole category of easily accessible books.

It was for some such reason as this that General Francis Pittié, who was at the Elysée under President Grévy, was so unanimously regretted by his customary purveyors, the wares in which he delighted being so rarely sold that no one has wanted any since. He bought indifferently everything which appeared or had appeared in French verse. His library, which was probably the most complete of its kind, was put up to auction after his death. His heirs got rid of his books, but they were not much the richer for doing so. Once again it was manifest that poetry, alas! is but unsubstantial food.

Among the book-hunters recently disappeared we must mention M. Chantelauze, the bibliographer of De Retz, familiarly known as the *Cardinal*. Chantelauze spent his life on the Paris quays in search of the classics of Didot, Renouard, Lefèvre, etc., on large paper and unsoiled. There was Champfleury, too, who bought engravings, caricatures, popular booklets printed at Troyes, at Épinal, at Rouen, at Lille, etc., and who has left his emulators, for several stall-keepers now put Tiger's editions, dirty and dilapidated, in the twenty-sou box. Then there was Feuillet de Conches, who hunted chiefly for autographs; and there was Michel Chasles, who sought old mathematical books and the works of learned Arabs, while labouring at those famous autographs which had such cruel deceptions in store for him—for which see the *Immortel* of Daudet.

Some years ago all the stall-keepers were greeting as a model customer one whose disappearance was not without causing trouble to a few of them. This was M. Captier, a rich merchant, who supplied cloth to the army.

Every day about five o'clock he invariably did his bibliographic round, glass in eye. His eclecticism and his knowledge of contemporary literature made him a model buyer, and, alas! almost a unique one—as has been seen



since—for copies of first editions and the first works of authors in whom talent is not quite absent. He also bought, at good prices, such manuscripts and autographs as luck had thrown into the dealer's hands. He disappeared suddenly after the affair of the *Comptoir d'Escompte*. It is said that he was almost ruined, and sold all his books, and out of a heroic fear of temptation he thenceforth abandoned the quays, even for taking a walk on them.

In the first rank of ever-faithful book-hunters we must place Xavier Marmier. His specialty was books in foreign languages, from Italian to the languages of the North, popular tales, and all that we to-day know as folk-lore. And, besides collecting these books, he made frequent and distant journeys. The only books he did not like finding in the stall-keeper's box were those he bought with most eagerness; he knew from long experience what numbers of excellent books were to be found on the parapets, and he could not suffer any of his to remain there. Ardently and continuously did he make a clean sweep of Marmiers, and such were the sympathy and respect with which he was surrounded that no one attempted to take advantage of this vainglorious but inoffensive mania by exaggerating the price, or by buying here and there in order to sell to him again the works of the worthy book-

hunter, which are by no means rare in second-hand shops. Book-hunting was for this academician such a serious function that he wore a special costume for the purpose; he could stow away bundles of books in his pockets, which were numerous and as deep as sacks. But in no other respect did he resemble the remarkable bibliomaniac of the *Vie de Bohème*. Of perfect politeness, in which were revived the best traditions of the old régime, Xavier Marmier never forgot after a bargain to offer the stall-keeper a cigarette, or, if the stall-keeper were of the feminine gender, to take a sweetmeat-box from his pocket and beg her to accept a chocolate pastille.

Anecdotes abound regarding this amiable man of letters; a respectable collection could be made of *Marmierana*. Here are one or two, to stimulate the appetite:

Not long ago M. Marmier bought for two sous a book which seemed to interest him greatly; to run through it after he had bought it he sat down on the stall-keeper's seat, after offering him a smoke. A moment afterwards he said to him: 'Ah! mon ami, you would not believe how pleased I am; I have been looking for this work for ten years;' and he put a five-franc piece into the hand of the astonished dealer.

Another time he had just bought at a low price a book of no importance, which he thought might some day come in useful, when it came on to rain, and he had to take shelter on the terrace of a neighbouring café. He asked



for a glass of milk, and began to examine the volume. In turning over the leaves he came to two stuck together, and on separating them found a hundred-franc note—hidden there by some bibliophile. At this moment he distinctly heard somebody close to him saying so sorrowfully, 'To-morrow I have to pay up. My wife and children will be in the street. I will sell the whole shop to-day. I have only taken six sous, which a gentleman with a ribbon gave me, and the day is over now the rain has come. Good-bye to trade, as far as I am concerned!' The 'gentleman with a ribbon' Marmier recognised as himself; the man who was groaning at the neighbouring table was none other than the stall-keeper who had sold him the book in which he had just made such an unlikely find. The academician rose, took the stall-keeper's hand, and slipped into it the hundred-franc note. 'Look here, my friend,' he said, 'you forgot what was in the book you sold me just now. I return it to you!'

Finally, in his will he inserted a clause which deserves to be quoted at length: 'In remembrance of the happy moments I have passed among the bookstall-keepers on the quays of the left bank—moments which I reckon among the pleasantest of my life—I leave to these worthy stall-keepers a sum of 1,000 francs. I desire that this amount shall be expended by these good and honest dealers, who number fifty or thereabouts, in paying for a jolly dinner and in spending an hour in conviviality and in thinking of me. This will be my acknowledgment for the many hours I have lived intellectually in my almost daily walks on the quays between the Pont Royal and the Pont Saint-Michel.'

It is in this way that memories are kept green. Before he disappears entirely in the glorious mist, we may as well give a sketch of him as he lived. A man of letters, the son of a bookseller, and now a book-hunter, has done

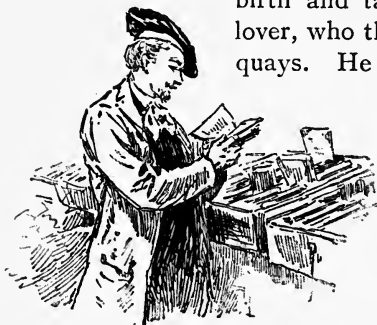
this with a delicacy and spirit which discourage us from attempting it again.

‘M. Marmier,’ he* says, ‘showed in his passion for books the modesty and discretion which were natural to him. I do not think that he had ever suffered from the slenderness of his fortune, which prevented him from competing with the pompous bibliophiles of the financial world for rare editions and historic bindings. The conversation of an obscure book, despised and badly clothed, but clever or learned, was good enough for him. His library seemed made in his own image. It was, if I am right in my opinion, an honest, good-humoured Babel, in which, in all the languages of the world, there was no talk but of sweet poetry and popular tales and the varied manners and customs of men. A book-lover now forgotten, but whom M. Marmier knew well, M. de Labédoyère, was annoyed by someone stating in a newspaper that he practised the art of “capping” his books. By this is understood the placing of a little paper cap on the upper edge of each volume, which is certainly a very innocent precaution. M. de Labédoyère was in error in supposing that there was any intention to injure him. I well know that I am not injuring the memory of M. Marmier in saying that he practised *remboîtage*. When he found a book richly bound and quite unworthy of its beautiful garb, he bought it to strip and use its morocco cover for some more estimable work less favoured by fortune. Doubtless the coat did not always exactly fit its new possessor, but the unkindnesses of fate were as much as possible atoned for, and the act was that of a learned man and a just one. I recognised on his shelves several of these Bernard the Hermits of the book-world. They looked by no means bad in their borrowed plumes, and the town of Pontarlier, to which M. Marmier bequeathed his library, may well be proud of the filial gift.

* Anatole France.

Many a time have I met him on the quays bending over the book-boxes, keen-sighted still, and it was always a happy meeting with the old man, who in features resembled Merimée, with more gentleness, and who never spoke but cleverly and kindly.'

The writer who signed these lines Anatole Thibaud, known under the name of Anatole France, is himself by birth and taste a very dainty book-lover, who thoroughly knows his Paris quays. He was born among books



and passed his childhood among them; and that is why he sympathizes more keenly than anybody with their owners. There it was he learnt to love literature, however humble and obscure; and, in

his father's name, he was able to claim a place at this banquet, in which a book-hunter invited the booksellers to hold high festival.

What has become of M. Fontaine, advocate and hunter of books? He belonged to the same generation as Xavier Marmier, and if he ever pleaded it was in 1830, or thereabouts. He had retained the costume of that romantic epoch, and also the fine ardour of discussion, and the noble faculty of becoming violently impassioned and enthusiastic which makes our present sceptics smile. He chiefly collected old editions of the French classics. Of Boileau alone he possessed sixty editions. A man enviable among all, for he had known how, simply and practically, to shape and limit his happiness.

It is not given to everybody to rejoice in this calm of possession. There are some like the Comte de Toustain,

for whom every book purchased loses its charm, and who spend their lives in selling back to one bookstall-man that which they bought from another, or in making complicated exchanges with which they are never contented. This kind of hunter is a treasure to the book-dealers, for every transaction with him ends to their profit.

What different tastes there are in this one pursuit of printed paper! M. Mouton-Duvernct only collects pamphlets of the eighteenth century; but he does not care for them on one page—three or four enchant him, eight pages wring a weary gesture from him, and when he meets with 16 pp. 8vo., he heaves a sigh and only with an effort persuades himself to buy.

Another, an old municipal councillor, M. Delzant, is in his way a seeker after the philosopher's stone and abstractor of the quintessence. He buys everything in prose and verse on the subject of happiness. When he has bought everything, this mystery, against which M. Sully-Prudhomme and so many others have jostled, should evidently have nothing to hide from him. But he has not bought all, and from the ardour he puts into it, it would seem as though the pursuit would last for some time. Meanwhile he bargains strenuously, and when he has obtained a deduction of five or ten sous he feels a foretaste of that absolute bliss of which he is seeking the definition.

A bachelor—we do not know whom he took into his confidence, but everybody on the quays knows him as the 'vieux garçon'—always looking as if he had stepped out of a band-box, and wearing a high hat with a wide brim, the mark of an independent spirit in science or in the arts



—never asks the price of a volume until he has carefully run through it to see that it is complete. And when he calls the dealer, he never fails to say to him at the outset : ‘ Such and such a leaf is turned up, you know, and there is



a tear on another page, a stain on another, a trace of mildew on the margins;’ and he fancies that in that way he will get the book at a lower price. It is not a bad calculation ; the dealer, generally honest and imperfectly acquainted with the state of each of his books, is rather shaken by these criticisms, which are as precise as they are sincere, and generally gives in with a view to further business.

Here we have the miserable curé, sordid in feature, beard unshaven for a week, cassock frayed and turning rusty, stockings dirty, shoes down at heel. Every day he passes along the parapet, collecting pamphlets and volumes of theology and religious polemics, of which the dearest only cost him a few sous. It happens that in his desire to get rid of unsaleable things the dealer offers him such clerical opuscula as *Miracles de la Salette*, *Apparition de Notre Dame de Lourdes*, lucubrations of M. Henri Lasserre or Monsignor de Ségur. When that occurs nothing can be more peculiar than his smile. ‘ It is mere bigotry,’ he murmurs, ‘ it cannot be taken seriously ;’ and he throws down the book with a vehement gesture of impatience and scorn.

M. du Désert collects books of broad humour and songs, with or without music. He is one of the old school, and is not afraid of buying an ugly or imperfect copy of a

book he wants. He will replace it if, some day, he comes across a better find—for he is one of those who ever make the best of things. He has many competitors. Where is the book-lover who has not been on the alert and the covet before a breezy story of the eighteenth century, or a prim and proper song-book with wide margins? Going not beyond his specialty, he does wisely in gathering all that comes to him, for, with a little patience and trouble, he is sure to get a good copy after two or three bad ones.

It is the same with the collectors of almanacs, literary miscellanies, books of beauty, and keepsakes. Copies well-bound and in good condition of these kinds of books attain high prices, and are rarely found but in shops with a circle of wealthy customers. But a goodly number of them of humble and unpretending aspect stray on to the quays. There the knowing book-



hunter seeks them, accumulating his duplicates, completing and improving unceasingly and gradually acquiring unbroken sets, interesting for their continuity and their generally handsome appearance. I know well that this proceeding is not unknown to M. de Spoëlberg de Lovenjoul, and that he has more than once adopted it in Paris, Brussels, and other places to complete a series of this kind of literature.

Who would imagine the peculiar hobby of Gustave Droz, the celebrated and charming author of *Monsieur, Madame, et Bébé*, who lives on the Quai Voltaire? The

story of the Jacques de Molay affair makes his heart beat high ; no romance affected him like *Ivanhoe* ; and he can but just pardon Philippe le Bel, because 'without his funereal piles literature would be infinitely poorer in works on the Knights of the Temple.' Let him take notice that he has rivals in England, and that certain booksellers of the United Kingdom never issue a catalogue without several entries under the heading *Templars*.

Every day between one o'clock and two, a high functionary in the finance department, M. Humbert, takes a stroll on the quays, from which he rarely returns empty. His field is fertile, in fact, and one of those in which at all seasons it is easy to glean. He buys indiscriminately all that concerns Paris—books, prints, music, newspapers, songs, biographies, portraits, etc. This emulator of our friend Paul Lacombe has published a very remarkable *Bibliographie Parisienne*. His daily acquisitions have shown him how impossible it is for him to complete such a task. His collection, which increases continually, deserves a better fate than that of so many superb libraries

on Paris which have been dispersed under the hammer like a dry cinder in the wind. Its proper place is at the Hôtel Carnavalet, a cenotaph really worthy of it.

The disquieting author of *A rebours* and *La-bas*, M. J.-K. Huysmans, is an assiduous book-hunter. We can hardly wonder at his more especially collecting works on mysticism

and occultism, books of sorcery, the rules of the religious orders, monographs on bells, and sacred music. Another



writer, M. Henri Céard, pries into the portfolios of engravings in search of Parisian scenes or portraits of Zola, which have escaped his attention at the moment of their appearance. His collection of iconographic curiosities is not, however, entirely confined to this author, and other contemporaries come in for notice; but a series of Zolas ought to be worth looking at, owing to the numerous modifications and avatars of the same subject.

Among the modern book-hunters we might mention all literary Paris—Claretie returning from the Académie, and Georges Monval on his way to the Théâtre-Français; Maurice Tourneux, the bibliographer of the Revolution; then the worthy philosophical poet, Raoul Ponchon, who, as an accomplished bibliophile, knows the boxes in the best corners, and delights in drinking the air and sunlight as he pries along the parapets; Bouchor occasionally takes to book-hunting, but without real conviction; De Goncourt now and then rummages in the boxes in search of some unexpected document. Then there are Coppée, Pailleron, Sully-Prudhomme.—But if we attempt to give the names of all those who go book-hunting among the men of letters—the doctors, the artists, painters, sculptors, or actors—we shall have to include quite a quarter of those whose names are inscribed on the *Bottin* of celebrity. We are continually being astonished at hearing of some instance of the book-hunting passion in cases where there is nothing to indicate a tendency that way. One thing is clear enough: ‘There are many more famous book-hunters than there are boxes on the quays.’

In the search after caricatures a successor to Champfleury has arisen in M. John Grand-Carteret. The notes that some of the stall-keepers have given us concerning him are not much in his favour. His bitterness in

bargaining and the abruptness of his speech have not apparently made him very popular on the quays. He none the less continues to collect with interest, avoiding, if he chooses, the dealers over whom he has triumphed.



Our advice to all good stall-keepers is not to neglect to put in a prominent position the big Latin editions in fine bold type, well framed in wide margins on good paper, particularly those of the Italian Boldoni, the Englishman Baskerville, or the Frenchman, Pierrè Didot. These are not books in the fashion, it is true; but the poet, Jean Richepin, and several

others delight in them, and from time to time he comes to try his fortune on that left bank he has never ceased to love. That the book is damaged externally does not matter to him. What he cares for is the state of the text; he knows how the noble and excellent may be hidden under the rags of the beggar and the tatters of destiny.

To this review, which is already lengthy, and which cannot be complete because in its renewal and development it is naturally interminable, we will add a worthy doctor of Passy, Doctor Nicolas, more curious to unearth along the quays old plates of anatomy and misery, and to examine old editions of Boerhaave, Mead, Joubert, and Alexis Piémontois than to visit the sick and enlarge his practice. What admirable prudence!

As he was a Norman, and had not lost his taste for cider and apple-trees, he left Paris last summer, taking away with his boxes of prints and books the regrets of

the few patients who had been attended by this wise man, who was both frank and learned, and who did not believe in medicine and had no hesitation in saying so.

By the side of the amateur there marches the professional, the bookseller or 'chineur.' On his account the trade on the quays would be prosperous if purchases were more easy and more numerous. The bookseller is generally a specialist. He may buy only books on the theatre and of romantic literature, like M. Léon Sapin of the Rue Bonaparte, who also buys autographs and show-bills. He may buy law books, like the booksellers from the Quartier de la Sorbonne, who take their turn on Sunday. Others buy classics, like M. Gibert, or even books of piety, like MM. Bache and Tralin or M. Estoup. Not so very long ago M. Dorbon, of the Rue de Seine, did his daily round, accompanied by Madame Dorbon, and secured everything that might be of a little value in a catalogue. His wife's death put an end to his excursions on the quays, which were so appreciated by the stall-keepers.

The 'chineurs,' whose trade consists in gathering out of the boxes everything saleable to a bookseller on which a profit can be made, do not often restrict themselves to one line; they take everything—literature, law, medicine, natural history, and the rest.

These 'chineurs' were formerly, and perhaps are still, three in number. The most curious of them is Guffroy. For five-and-twenty years he has been exploring the quays; a lucrative exploration which yields him an agreeable existence. No one can scent a rare book or one out of print more keenly than he can; he is up to date in all branches of bibliography, including the most recent productions of modern literature. He knows all the booksellers who really mean business, and who appreciate the services he renders them by centralizing to their

advantage everything that would escape them. And he always gets the best prices for his discoveries.

M. Philippeaux, who was formerly a bookseller, is in the same line of business. An excellent connoisseur of romantic works and 'curious' books, he is far from the equal of Guffroy in the universality of his bibliographic knowledge.

The third man is Morel. He is an old stall-keeper from the Quay Conti, whose specialty is law and medicine. With a prudence inspired, so say the stall-keepers, by

avarice, he would often rather lose the chance of a profit of several francs than pay for a book a few centimes more than he offers. He is known all along the quays

as *Chipoteau*. The stall-keepers are unanimous in declaring that the nickname is due to his outrageous ways of trading and his meanness in business.

He himself gives an explanation that is more amusing, if not more true. *Chipoteau* is merely a corruption of *Chapoteau*, the name of a dealer in bric-à-brac who died a few years ago. He was a frequenter of

the sale-room, where his ugly face and Auvergnat ways were well known. One day, as Morel was at a sale at which the auctioneer had some trouble in obtaining silence, the facetious 'chineur' provoked a renewal of the uproar by climbing on to a cupboard. The auctioneer, who did not know of the death of the bric-à-brac dealer, and did not suppose that a man so ugly could have a twin, sharply rebuked the disturber. 'Monsieur Chapoteau,' he shouted, 'I will have you put out!' The mistake appeared so natural and so droll that henceforth every-



body called Morel Chapoteau, which in the usual way of nicknames became corrupted into Chipoteau. It is thus that symbols come.

Here we must close this chapter on the book-hunters, which we cannot pretend to be complete. We have written it without concerning ourselves overmuch with what our predecessors, like Jules Janin, Nodier, P. Lacroix (Jacob), have so amusingly written on a subject as vast as no other human passion, and perhaps richer than any in picturesque anecdote. The books on special subjects which follow similar books are only useful in offering fresh notes or original views. In this mono-

graph of the Paris quays our endeavour is to gossip to our best ability on familiar matters, but we are conscious of omitting many book-hunters of the humbler sort, such as the cab-drivers on the neighbouring stand, in every one of whom the taste for old books prospers by contagion, so to speak, or even many old midwives gifted with a similar appreciation.



But he who knows not when to stop knows not the art of writing. Let us pass on to the kleptomaniac book-hunters, otherwise the book-stealers. Meanwhile, we will conclude with an excellent description of the book-hunter's delights.

'You must experience,' says a book-lover, 'the pleasure of book-hunting to know it, to give it its due as a beneficent and consoling genius. If this pleasure is not more sweet and faithful than the rest, it is richer in varied emotions, more welcome to gentle and pensive organiza-

tions, more real, more true, more material; we see young men giving themselves over to it with enthusiasm, men of talent and wit taking never-ending pleasure in it, the rich and the powerful delighting in it in preference to all the playthings of power and all the baubles of wealth!

‘We see sybarites, slaves of their senses and external impressions, leaving their fireside in winter and the cool shelter of their lime-trees in summer, to brave the heat and cold, the breeze and fog, the nauseous odours of the old books, and rest their eyes on pages filthy, smoky, stinking of tobacco, pestilential.’

Was he not right, this dear Paul Lacroix, when he wrote: ‘If I were asked who is the happiest man, I would reply: A book-lover, supposing that he is a man. Whence it results that happiness is an old book!’





THE BOOK-STEALERS.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

NOWADAYS progress is commendable, or we may even say enviable, for we have no wish to be considered reactionary; but that progress is always advantageous we are not prepared to admit. There must always be a slight allowance for waste, and in most cases this waste must be enormous.

Thus it was that we rejoiced with all the stall-keepers of the quays at the permission they obtained to fix their stalls permanently on the parapets. But this advantage, like every other, is not without its inconveniences. It happens that during the night boxes are forced open, and their contents carried off by the burglars, who no more respect the abode of the old books than they do a

kitchenmaid's room. They have rifled the newspaper kiosks, the cobblers' stalls, the New Year's Day booths, the church poor-boxes, the costermongers' barrows, the automatic machines, the street-boxes in which the scavengers keep their tools, and it would be a wonder if the book-boxes were respected or neglected by these Parisian pirates.

The dealers, who are men of good sense and philosophers by nature, are aware of the risk they run in leaving their goods on the quays. But they are not unduly uneasy, being content to line their boxes well, to fasten them down to solid iron bars, to secure them with heavy padlocks, and for the rest to trust in Providence and the vigilance of the police.

'The injury these thefts cause us,' said one of them, 'cannot be very great. The boxes are broken into very seldom, and then on a darker night than usual, or during a few moments when they are left unwatched, such as when an accident or a crime occurs in the neighbourhood, and calls off the attention of the guardians of the peace. The thieves have not time to visit many of the boxes; they dare not take many books at a time, for fear of being stopped at the first corner of the street; unless the honest god, Mercury, guide their hand, they have twenty times less chances of breaking into a box of books at two or three francs than into one with books at ten or fifteen sous, or even less. Thus it is that these thefts, while annoying to the dealer who is the victim, are but a trifle to the stall-keepers in general, who are amply compensated for them by the diminution of the expenses and labour due to the establishment of these fixed stalls. And it may be added that, as a general rule, the thieves clear off with goods of little value, and that, considering the trouble they take and the risks they run, they may well think they have themselves been robbed.'

‘I am quite convinced,’ said one stall-keeper, not without humour, ‘that it is a game that is never tried twice. It is difficult, it is dangerous, and it never pays the Turpin who attempts it.’

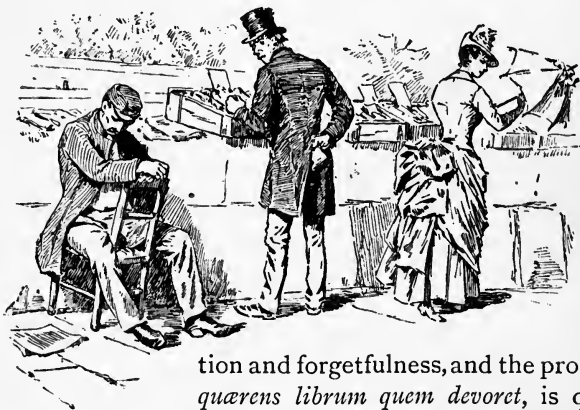
In short, the burglar has no more interest in breaking into the boxes of the stall-keepers than they have in being friends with him; and as opportunities are not wanting for him to amuse himself with more honour—everything is relative—and profit, he generally despises this very tame sport.

It is with other enemies less alarming but more formidable that the stall-keepers have to do. These work in broad day, amid the noise and crowd of the passers-by. Common thieves, who lift a book as their brethren lift a handkerchief or a watch, are, by the frequency of their depredations and the difficulty of suppressing them, more injurious to the merchants of the parapet than all the bandits of American racecourses and other well-haunted places. It is during the day that you should keep your eyes open; in proclaiming this, logic, prudence, and the physiognomy are agreed. But the stall-keepers are often humorists, and such of them as would at the least suspicion come during the night and take their turn with a cudgel under their arm and a revolver in their pocket, consider a daily watch as a superfluity bordering on the absurd, for surely when you watch it is during the night; but during the day, what is the use of it?

And so they give the thieves a chance. Some—a few, we admit, but enough to make their absence remarkable—spend three-parts of the day at the wine-shop more or less opposite, making an occasional rapid appearance before their boxes between a couple of turns at the bar; others, lounging on a bench or straddling on a chair, turn their back to their stall, and resting their chin on their chest, rejoice in wealth and happiness to the

fullest extent, though the wealth and happiness that come when we sleep generally vanish at the first awakening.

Others have an unfortunate passion for reading, and become so absorbed as to see nothing and hear nothing of what passes around them. I say nothing of the scandal-mongers, who, rather than lose an argument or interrupt a good story, would let everything go to ruin. Besides, the most vigilant have their moments of distrac-



tion and forgetfulness, and the prowler, *quærens librum quem devoret*, is quick to profit by them. These last victims get the most sympathy, for they are more sensitive to injury. Nothing is more heartbreaking than to be swindled when one is on one's guard. But the thief careth not; on the contrary, it affords him the excitement of difficulty vanquished and danger braved.

'If I had to depict the animal they call the Idler, exclaims Thomas Nash, 'I swear by St. John the Evangelist that I would represent him with the features of a bookseller I know, who sticks his thumb under his belt, and whenever anyone comes to his stall to ask for a volume, moves not his head nor even looks at his customer, but remains like a stone, without saying a word,

and contents himself with indicating with his little finger behind him the boy who is the interpreter of his silence and indolence ; and thus it is all day with him : yawning silently like an image, he remains without movement except at meal-times, when he becomes active enough for three men, for he eats six times a day.*

Know you not one or more living oddities worthy of being classed with this portrait of an English bookseller at the end of the sixteenth century ? What a triumph for the partisans of reincarnation !

It has happened to us more than once to have to leave at a stall a book we very much wanted because, in spite of all our gestures and our appeals, no one has come forward to tell us the price or take the money. On other occasions, after having shouted for the dealer in vain, our desire has been stronger than our scruples, and we have then and there taken the book, leaving in its place the few sous that the ticket on the box showed to be its price.

Under these conditions robbery is really too easy, and the negligence of the dealers is not only fatal to their interests, but corrupting to weak consciences and sickly morals.

Here is an amateur, a well-dressed gentleman, who buys now and then, and who arrives with two or three volumes under his arm. He stops before a stall, places his little pile of books on the corner of a box, handles and examines minutely a lot of books, decides upon none, picks up his volumes, and takes himself off. But at the same time he has taken away the most interesting book in the box, which he was careful to slip among his own. What can the dealer do ? He has suspected him for a long time, and he hopes that some day he will catch him in the act. But the gentleman is too wary. He waits

* Thomas Nash : *Pierce Penilesse*, 1592.

until the stall-keeper's attention is called off by another customer, or by a colleague in quest of change, or of a light, or of a pipe of tobacco, and he makes sure of his game. Run after him when he is a good way off, and



make him account for the books he is carrying? That would be rather risky, and if a mistake were made might end in the confusion of the bookstall man. And if there were hardly a doubt, could not the rascal argue that one book unpaid for among two or three others was a mistake, an inadvertence? The book had slipped among his own without his knowing how; he thought he put it back in the box, and if it got under his arm it was quite by

chance, and not by intention! And how could you prove it to be otherwise?

This gentleman dodger is one of the most mischievous and unseizable enemies of the book-dealer, on whom he levies a toll which is all the more onerous from its being of almost daily occurrence.

So it is with the man who hangs about the stalls and fidgets about, reading one volume while he slyly slips another under his vast overcoat—the volume disappearing, or rather being swallowed up, with nothing to betray its presence.

A newspaper folded in four is almost as useful an auxiliary for book-stealing as a cloak with heavy folds and deep pockets, and it is also less suspicious. The amateur in search of books at sight holds his newspaper carelessly in his left hand; he approaches a box, picks up

a book—a duodecimo for choice—opens it, reads a page, two pages, twenty pages; one is tempted to offer him a chair. But it is not to his reading that he is so attentive. He never loses sight of the stall-keeper, and as soon as his back is turned, or his attention called away, the book is shut, and inserted within the fold of the journal, which the thief slips under his arm as he strolls off peaceful and satisfied. Who would imagine that a man who carries under his armpit a newspaper folded in four has walked off with a book he has not paid for? That is what contemporary journalism ends in! There is an entirely novel consideration, which we offer gratuitously to legislators in quest of arguments for ‘muzzling the press.’

Artists of this sort vary their methods of procedure, and occasionally the celebrated phrase, *Væ soli*, works both ways. One of them, looking strange and uneasy, and glancing to the right and left, and turning his head from side to side like a wild beast pursued, who has just distanced his hunters and stops to breathe for a moment, halts before a stall, seizes a book, and handles it feverishly. ‘Ah! ah!’ says the dealer, ‘that is a thief. Wait a bit, my boy; I will show you who I am!’ The fellow waits until, at the other end of the line of boxes, he has seen an accomplice pick up a book, put it in his pocket and walk off with it. Then he replaces his volume and moves tranquilly away with his hands behind him. The dealer is only half mistaken; he has seen only the moiety of his robber, the sleeping partner as it were. The other partner is seated in a neighbouring wine-shop far enough away not to be patronized by the bookstall men, and there he awaits his comrade with the calm satisfaction of a fortunate scoundrel who has neatly succeeded in his attempt. Sometimes two or three individuals will walk together along the quays while an acolyte prowls along the shore immediately beneath. The walkers carefully examine the

books placed all of a row on the stone at certain parts of the parapet, and find no difficulty in giving a volume a push to tumble it over into the arms of the accomplice below.

The clumsy thief who can be run after is rare. We



remember one, however, snatching an English dictionary worth five francs from the stall of M. Rigaud. Rigaud, being told, started off in pursuit. The thief ran down the line of cabs and threw the book into one of them. He was captured and, in spite of his denials, was taken to the station; there he was searched, and several false keys and a jemmy were found on him. He was adjudged guilty next day, and sentenced to thirteen months' imprisonment.

Like all dealers in second-hand goods, the bookstall-keepers have to make sure of the

identity of the people who sell them their books, and, if they do not know them personally, to pay them only at their place of abode. It is very seldom that they break this rule, which is a very wise one, but rather vexatious in practice, owing to the loss of time and many journeyings it entails. The infraction, when indulged in only now and then, and with prudence and tact, has few ill

consequences ; but apparently some of the dealers offend systematically. Every book which is offered to them at an absurdly low price is eagerly accepted and paid for on the spot, without any questions as to where it comes from. If this want of scruple does not bring them a fortune, it causes them a good deal of trouble. Their comrades discover in their boxes the books they can identify as having been stolen from them, and although they make no accusation regarding the willing receipt of stolen property, they very naturally resume possession of it. If the imprudent buyers are obliged to hand it back and lose the trifling price they have paid for it, they are fortunate in being let off so easily.

A few years ago some working bookbinders came to an understanding with certain unscrupulous stall-keepers, who have since disappeared. The quays were then well supplied with entirely new books, which were nearly always cut—a precaution the very excess of which was suspicious. This clandestine trade became a matter of public notoriety, but to come down on the guilty parties was not easy. One of them, however, was taken in the act and sentenced to six months' imprisonment ; this made the others more careful, and in time the dangerous game was played out.

A stall-keeper on the Quai Voltaire, whose name we have already mentioned, was one day the victim of a misadventure which caused him to be mistaken for a confederate of this gang, notwithstanding the honourable reputation he justly enjoyed. He had bought from a journalist, as is often done, a lot of new books among which were certain recent works issued by the ex-publisher of the incoherents, Jules Lévy.

Having bought them from the journalist for an insignificant sum, he was able to mark them at very low prices. A little time after this acquisition a hawker bought a few, and asked if he could get any more. The stall-keeper was

absent, but his neighbour, who was acting for him, replied in a pompous way : ' As many as you like ! ' This came to the ears of Jules Lévy, who was then the victim of numerous thefts. Without delay he had the stall-keeper arrested for receiving stolen goods. The unhappy man was put in a cell by himself, a visitation was made to his house, several new books from Hetzels' were found there, and his guilt seemed unmistakable to the worthy policeman. Whereupon the neighbour, understanding that he was the cause of the trouble, went and told about his little joke ; the presence of Hetzels' books was accounted for by Hetzels themselves ; and the policeman, who had reported the capture of a chief of a dangerous gang, had to set the innocent stall-keeper at liberty with many apologies—rather a poor compensation for two days' solitary confinement.

The stall-keepers are often the victims of a maniac they know well, but who is too clever for them, so that they have not yet succeeded in taking him by surprise. This gentleman's specialty is books with illustrations. When a volume pleases him, he turns over the leaves for a long time before making up his mind to buy it ; but if during its examination he can seize a favourable moment, he makes no scruple of tearing out the plates and tranquilly restoring it to its place. Another thief boldly puts down the money and buys books without much chaffering ; but from time to time he brings back one or two volumes which he accuses the stall-keeper of having sold to him complete, whereas on examination he has found them to have several pages missing. Should the dealer have collated the book and found it correct, and raise difficulties as to exchanging the mutilated copy, the gentleman will adopt a high tone and complain of being cheated, and enlarge on the respect that should be paid to him—a substantial man and an excellent customer. This device was discovered one fine day, and in this way :

The man had bought at one of the stalls on the Quai Voltaire a book, of which the stall-keeper possessed several copies ; the copy sold had not been cut. A few days afterwards the purchaser returned with the volume cut from the first to the last page, and declared that in the course of his reading he had noticed that two pages were missing. The bookstall man, delighted at having an opportunity of convicting this undesirable customer of unscrupulousness, took from his boxes a copy like the one which was said to be incomplete, and easily showed that the two missing pages were part of a sheet of which the other pages were present, and that they could not possibly be missing in an uncut copy unless the whole sheet had been omitted in binding. The demonstration was victorious, and the justly enraged stall-keeper proclaimed it far and wide without any regard for the *respectability* of his customer. The Quai Voltaire was henceforth relieved from the visits of this personage, who still finds occasional dupes on the other quays.

A stall-keeper of our acquaintance, who would give points to Balzac or Vidocq as a physiologist, and to Bourget as a psychologue, has drawn up a table of cases of legitimate suspicion which every prudent dealer should have always before him.

He should be suspicious of :

1. Women with bags or baskets, and keep an eye on all women with muffs.
2. Men or women wearing waterproofs, or ulsters or carricks, and who do not look like ambassadors or princesses.
3. Gentlemen who bargain for a volume at five francs,



and have their toes longer than their boots ; if they offer four francs fifty, and you take them at their word, they have not the money on them, and ask you to put the book on one side until they call to-morrow. But the morrow is an obliging friend who passes without announcing his presence, and takes off, without paying, the interesting works that the other has reported to him.

4. Keep close to people in capacious coats, the back of whose neck is wide and wrinkled, the back of whose hand is tanned, while the palm is smooth and white. These are the people who live out of doors and do not work. Every trade leaves its stigmata, and these bear the mark of the thief.

But we shall do wisely in ending these wise observations, and passing on to a subject dealing less with the police court and more interesting on the whole, that of the physiology of the stall-keeper.

Kleptomaniac book-hunters deserved a few lines in our study of the frequenters of the Parisian quays ; but in truth they are quite exceptional.





THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE BOOKSTALL-KEEPER.

HIS ORIGIN AND HIS CAREER.

IT would be pretentious, as we have already said, to endeavour to assign to living bookstall-keepers as a whole any well-marked character, or even to describe in a really definite manner the peculiarities of our friends of the quays. The principal reason for this is the one we hear on all sides in these days: 'The profession is no longer what it was'; many come on to the quays, but few remain there, and there consequently exists neither professional feeling, nor similarity of manners and temperament, nor regularity of attire, and hence the complete absence of any special type.

And, in addition to this, we have now reached a

chapter which necessitates a sincere and urgent confession as far as we are concerned.

When, towards the end of 1886—seven years ago, alas!—we sketched out this book, the quays of Paris, from the book-hunter's point of view, were still highly picturesque; you could then meet with interesting individualities, and the boxes were occasionally filled with books that suggested thought and provoked perusal. Three veterans of the stall then disputed the seniority of the corporation—Debas, Malorey, and Rosez; their presence on the parapets, like the presence of the old sergeants in a regiment, kept up the old tradition.

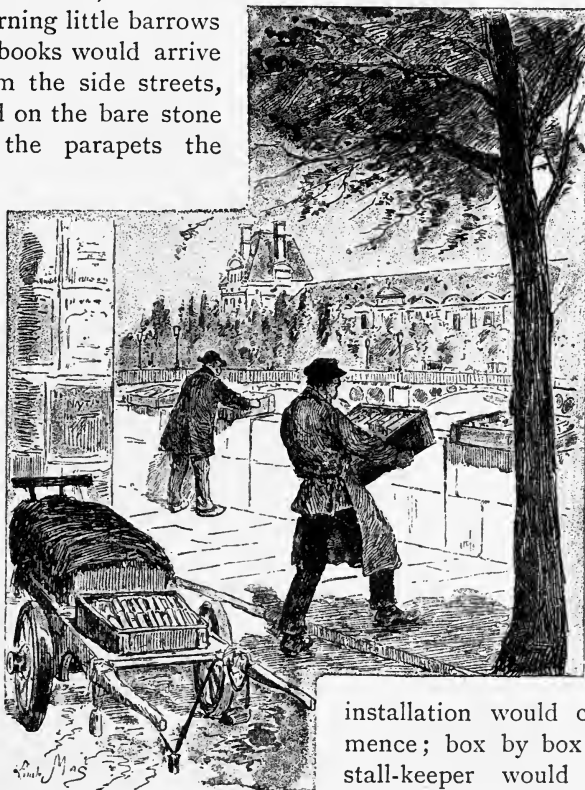
To the stall-keepers of the younger generation they brought their experience and their remembrances, and we were glad to find at their posts these three ancients of the immediate past, whose manners, although somewhat peevish, were pleasant and courteous, and whose stories and anecdotes were occasionally extraordinary.

Standing by the side of these were many others whom we have mentioned as an honour to their trade.

The stall-keepers of 1886, however, had kept to their movable stalls; they camped on the parapets of the Seine like a tribe of nomads, spending their day out of doors, exposed to the rain, to the sun, to the storm, the only shelter to their books being tarpaulins, which they unrolled as soon as the sky clouded over and a shower threatened to spoil everything. Their primitive boxes were all different and full of the unexpected; it seemed like a huge vagrancy of crippled books demanding alms of the passer-by, and with curiosity one approached these cripples who looked so proud in their dirt and raggedness. The boxes which contained them were either damaged or hastily nailed together like the coffins of the pauper's grave, and daubed with staring, striking colours like the prow of an old Breton barge; all of which looked delight-

ful, glaring in the bright summer sun or streaming in the winter rain, adding a strange aspect and a cheerful note to the pleasant Parisian scenery.

The quays were continuously animated with a life of their own; in the morning little barrows of books would arrive from the side streets, and on the bare stone of the parapets the

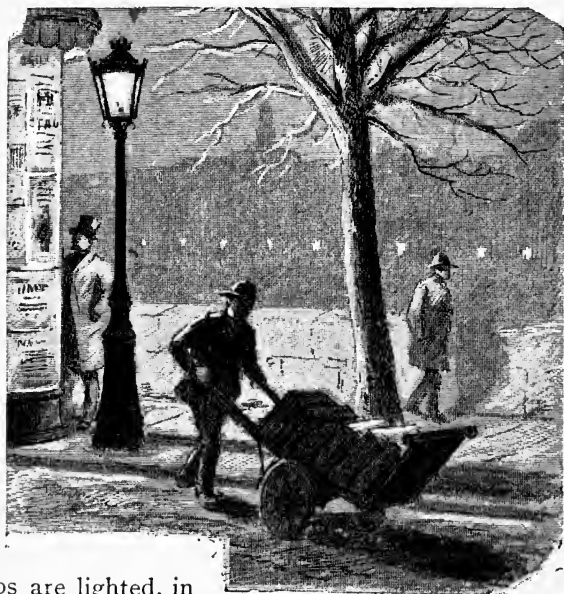


installation would commence; box by box the stall-keeper would arrange his temporary shop

and take up his quarters for the day, complacently expectant of the coming guest. Often would he lunch in the open air, with no seat or table beyond his *roulette*, his wife also coming with the hot meat and the

restorative litre to have her meal by her husband's side. On Seine's delightful banks, ever alive with gaiety, and wrapped in an atmosphere provocative of mirth, these various transactions of the bookstall world would yield many a picture for the lounge, for whom Paris and her adorable moving panoramas were not without fascination.

In the evening, at that vague hour when the street-



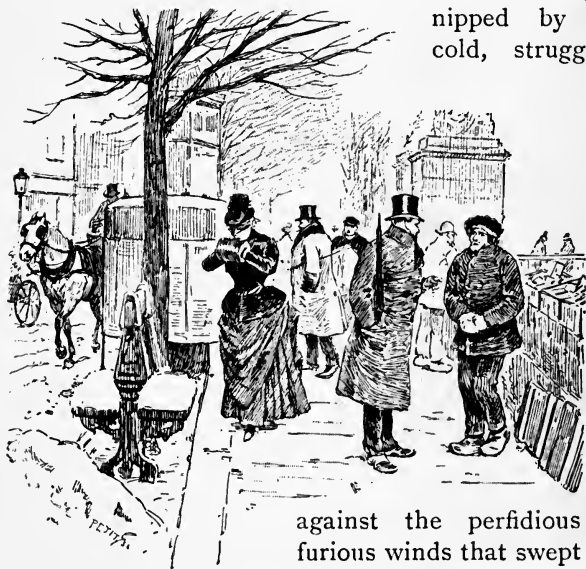
lamps are lighted, in the slaty hue of the dying day, the stall-keepers, their day's work done, would strike their camp in haste. One by one the heavy boxes were lifted up and laid on the little barrow; the parapets resumed their normal aspect, while along the Rues de Beaune, des Saint-Pères, Bonaparte, Mazarine, and others, the booty of the stall-keepers would be hurriedly run towards the store-rooms, bumping over the unequal

paving, bearing to the ears of the shopkeepers in the quarter the familiar sound that told them the hour of supper had come.

If these conditions of life had nothing attractive in them for the worthy stall-keepers, if the fatigue of their eternal journeyings of the morning and the night was too much for them, and transformed them into Sisyphuses of old books, it is none the less true that for the curious the quays of Paris, six years ago, had more character and more life, and yielded more notable artistic phases than they do now.

After the petition to the Municipal Council in 1888, on the initiative of M. Jacques, of whom we have spoken, it was decided two years afterwards to accord the stall-keepers the right of keeping their boxes permanently on the parapets, on condition that the boxes should be fixed on to the granite by clamps of solid iron sunk into the stone, and giving the wished-for slope. Since 1890, on account of this permission, a complete change has come over the quays. One Beury, a stall-keeper at the corner of the Pont Neuf, was the first to adopt the system; the others gradually followed, and to-day the great majority of the stall-keepers are the owners of superb new boxes, covered with lids of shining zinc, clean as show-cases, the uniformity of which gives to the open-air trade in books such a look of comfort and substantiality, monotonous and commonplace, that the stalls appear to be the branch establishments of the shops opposite to them. When the night comes, or at the first alarm of rain, in a twinkling of an eye every box is shut, a long iron bar is laid horizontally along the cases, slipped into the staples, and padlocked on to the parapet. The stall-keepers are thus saved transport and standing for the barrow and storage-room; and the books, less handled and knocked about and more securely protected, are kept in better condition. In a practical

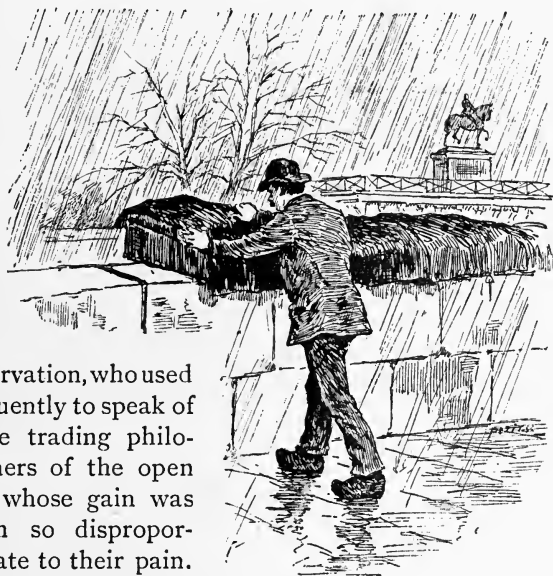
sense it is undeniable that the new mode is perfect. The stall-keepers of six years ago, who in 1886 inspired the dedication of this book, which was then in part printed, and who suggested the optimistic opinions of our preliminary chapter, are no longer so nomadic as they were then, nor are they the strange Bohemians who inspired us with such tender sympathy. We spoke of them in the winter in the days of bitter frost, stoical in the icy wind, their fingers nipped by the cold, struggling



against the perfidious or furious winds that swept the pathway, ready at every change in the weather to roll or unroll the waterproof sheeting that covered their goods. We delighted in comparing them with rude sailors setting out to sea at all times, hoisting sail in the storm, and steering according to the stream. Then at a glimpse of sunshine it pleased us to see them come forth like the inhabitants of the ark when they gazed in admiration at the colours of

the rainbow, and opening their boxes by degrees according to the variations of the barometer.

All the historians of the Paris pavements, seekers after the last of the professions having a trace of independence about them, have been seized like us with a vague sentimentalism for these excellent stall-keepers, whose life was so hard ; as also have the serious chroniclers, those who know the joys of leisurely book-hunting, blended with



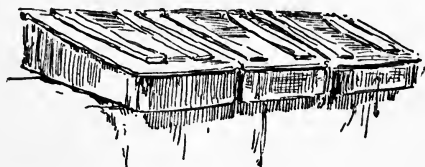
observation, who used frequently to speak of these trading philosophers of the open air, whose gain was often so disproportionate to their pain. That is why this book

was undertaken in 1886 at a propitious moment. Now we have only to finish it ; the quays are crowded up with books, and soon will be but long lines of commonplace shops, all alike and all uninteresting.

The majority of the men who now share the parapets are, as we have already said, stall-keepers from other trades, mere booksellers for the time being, rapidly

initiated into a trade under the relatively easy conditions we propose forthwith to enumerate.

Since the law as to the liberty of the press, that is to say, since 1881, all the impediments in the bookselling trades have been removed, and applications for stall-space have flowed into the prefecture of the Seine. Generally



these applications are immediately granted, and thus we have the ever-increasing number of the stalls, for it is in vain that you

will seek a vacant spot between the Pont Notre Dame and the Pont Royal; and it has even been necessary to organize in the *mairie* of the Fourth Arrondissement a *service de piquage* to enable the applicants crowded out from the right bank, which is in the Seventh Arrondissement, to settle on the left bank, which will soon be as crowded as the other.

This flood of stall-keepers, overflowing from so many very different trades, is a subject of constant complaint on the part of those who remember with bitterness the old faces that have vanished from our parapets. The few second-hand booksellers worthy of the name, who have kept themselves afloat amid the inundation of strange elements, who have always lived on books and by books, are loud in their chorus of lamentation. 'It is not proper trading! They sell books as they would sell apples! There is nothing worth having to be got now! Genuine customers are disgusted and go away! What is to become of us all?'

There is much truth in these complaints; but the multiplication of stall-keepers, and their bibliognostic incompetence, must not be considered as the preponder-

ating causes of this crisis in the second-hand book trade, for during the last ten years there have been many modifications which have found their way into the sale-room. Formerly the expert only put in an appearance at the important sales; he aided the auctioneer in acting in the best interest of the heirs in the dispersal of known libraries, occasionally, however, venturing a few inquiries into private collections reported to him as containing rarities; but that was all—the everyday sort of books being sold in lots, at haphazard, without preliminary sorting, that is to say, with the chance of an occasional windfall. It is not so now; the smallest lot, even of ten volumes, is passed through the sieve; the baskets, the good baskets of the fat and happy years, hold now but a hybrid mass of things without a name: stained pamphlets, soiled with candle-grease and oil, old directories, diaries, almanacks, and other rubbish. The unfortunate stall-keeper, reduced to the supplies from the Hôtel Drouot, to which he cannot obtain admission without an understanding with the *black gang*, can no longer stock his stall but with the odds and ends that are abandoned to him with regret.

There is the Salle Sylvestre as well, where the bidding is more open, and the lots fairer and more merchantable; but the sales there get rarer every day, and their arrangement necessitates considerable purchases for him who would be constant in his more agreeable and more lucrative attendance at this room. The other stall-keepers, the less fortunate ones (and they are the most numerous), have therefore but very limited resources, which completely fail them during the long summer months. The *marchés bourgeois* are also unknown to the greater number, for the water flowing always to the river, it is naturally to the richest stalls that the vendors apply to clear off the excess of their libraries; and, it may as well be admitted,

almost without exception these stalls are maintained or retained by the booksellers. The *marché bourgeois* is thus beyond the reach of the poor bookstall-keeper, who is reduced, as we see, to the rummagings of the sale-room, whether he frequents the 'unclean cavern,' or consents to be supplied by the hawkers who take his place in this attendance, and come soon afterwards to offer him on the quays their meagre hauls, naturally increased in price by as much as he can stand.

These petty details may not seem to have much to do with the physiology of the stall-keeper; but that is a mistake. They will be developed in our chapter on the book trade, but it was of advantage to mention them here, so as to show the logic of the lamentations common to book-hunters and bookstall-keepers.

No, alas! the quays will never more see the excellent stalls of former days, which held in their boxes we so lovingly searched the edition, rare or curious, we had coveted so long, or the mere implement of work yielding at one and the same time the pleasure of an inestimable find and the satisfaction of a benefit often considerable.

To-day the book-hunters, tired of seeking in vain among the heterogeneous productions which are only very distantly related to the domain of thought, are discouraged, and make but very occasional appearances on the quays, if they do not disappear altogether.

The stall-keeper has to make up for the circle that is abandoning him by another circle which formerly he used to despise, and that is why he seeks the passer-by.

The passer-by for the bookstall-man is the unknown customer whom the chances of life bring one day on the quay, and whom he may never again set eyes on. He will profit by his walk to give a casual glance at the

stalls, and occasionally allow himself to be tempted by the sight of a *Larousse*, a *Cuisinière bourgeoise*, or a *Roman* of Dumas père reduced to six sous. During the holidays this passer-by may have come with his son in search of a *Quicherat* or some other classic necessary for studies at school. On Sundays a special circle of small tradesmen and workmen appear on the quays. This is a good day for the few who open their boxes, and offer mammas and their daughters the choice of piano pieces at 0 fr. 10, or patterns of needlework, or flowers to paint, etc.; or offer the workman a collection of former *feuilletons* read on the ground-floor of his journal, or, in more serious vein, a handbook on smith's work, or cabinet work or decoration. All of which go off better than cakes.

The keeping up of a stock like this does not require a very varied bibliographic knowledge; the stall-keeper has to provide for the day only, to live by his trade as well as he can, and, as in all trades, to work hard and get money. Knowledge, it may be frankly said, has become a load more harmful than useful to contemporary second-hand booksellers.

It will be gathered that with these new ways the general physiology of the quays is being rapidly reduced to a level. The originality of the old stall-keepers was due in some way to the singular resemblance which existed between their character and the special nature of their merchandise. Each stall-keeper had then his peculiar class of books in accordance with his ideas and disposition. All of them were as much philosophers as dealers; during the quiet, happy hours of summer, in the good, warm, communicative sun, they found in the authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the elements of a singular conversation often fairly substantial and interesting. Their old customers soon became their friends; similarity of thought awoke agreeable sympathies;

pleasing discussions were often prolonged beyond the time necessary for the daily acquisitions, and in this daily contact the mind of the bookseller became every day



more identified with that of the book-writer and also with the minds of his favourite patrons; to those faces, occasionally common by birth, this vague intellectual culture, constant and conscious, gave them an expression of satisfaction and an air of understanding; their features became refined, and their look gifted with the clearness and

fervour and archness undeniably acquired by superficial erudition and daily intercourse with the distinguished and elevating.

Their ways were influenced by this; their courtesy was, doubtless, a little obsequious and antiquated, and their attire affected the style and negligences analogous to those of the learned, careless of draperies and mere externals, but these wise dealers and peripatetic philosophers had a physiognomy worthy of attention, and their conversation was not without zest.

In a mixed crowd of professionals, you could ten years ago unmistakably pick out the second-hand bookseller; while to-day he is indistinguishable from other mortals. The change is complete. For good or evil, the evolution has been accomplished; a ditch has been dug between the manners of the bookstall-keeper of the past and those of his successor, which will grow wider with time. Should we regret this? We hardly know. In any case, if the distinctive type of the profession has disappeared, if the relief of the effigy has been effaced and lost its character,

the main body has retained its character for indifference, good-humour, conversational ease, and familiar irony such as would only be expected of *open-airists* living in the light and in perambulating liberty.

The bookstall man is an amusing fellow, easily jovial, prompt at discussion on every subject under the sun; he is, more often than not, good company, without apparent jealousy or real envy. Entering eagerly into the excitement of the auction-room, delighting in running up lot after lot against his colleague, he forgets in the morning on the quay the outbursts of the night before at the Salle Sylvestre, and cordially shakes the hand which has failed to grapple him. He understands the advantage of community of interests, and practises it largely. There is never a subscription list in favour of an unfortunate colleague to which he does not subscribe generously; and without hesitation he will leave his stall to follow the funeral of a dead comrade, or that of any member of any comrade's family.

A bit of a toper by nature, never averse to an appetiser, and always ready for a drink, the bookstall man is never a drunkard for drinking's sake; he invariably keeps himself fit for his work, and his morality is above suspicion.

Without pretending that scrupulous honesty on the quays is a rule without exception, we may affirm that the bookstall man is almost always honest at heart, and, whether he buys or sells, rejoices in straightforwardness. The spirit of the Norman is generally strong within him, but whether it be matter of sale or loan, his word is ever as good as his bond. Any bargaining you may have begun, any deposit you may have made, is safe enough with him.



It is the general rule on the quays to sell incomplete books as such, and to put a price on everything, without, as is done in other trades, fixing the price according to the look of the buyer and the eagerness he shows for possession. There are a few exceptions, as we have shown in this book, and a few stall-keepers take advantage of the manner or appearance or eagerness of a customer to increase their price; but the rule exists, nevertheless.

Paul Lacroix, in a little book entitled *Ma République*, briefly sketched a vague and appreciative physiology of the bookstall man, from which we may extract the most curious passages.

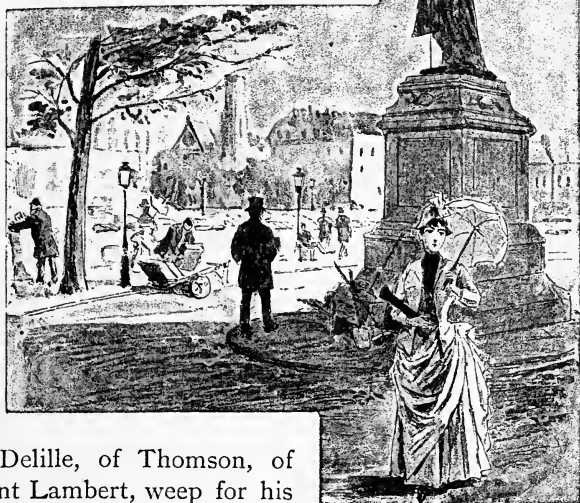


‘How much,’ says he, ‘is this humble and paltry trade dependent on the mildness and repose of the atmosphere! The stall-keeper who lives with a roof over his head, or at the wine-bar, foresees the storm even further off than the old pilot, and predicts fine weather with more facility than the Bureau des Longitudes. Behold him as he watches the drift of the clouds and the gyrations of the weathercock; he shakes his head and runs into port with the ship that bears his fortune, or he rubs his hands and

sings as he spreads out his cargo without fear of the storm.

‘Often a novice, who knows not the secret oracles of the barometer, will trust in a blue sky and a deceitful sun, to see the elements make sport of his fragile fortune, the hurricane suddenly swoop on his tattered bindings, the rain in huge drops mark his virgin page, and stream from leaf to leaf, submerging even the Bible in this new deluge.

‘Thus did the labourer of Virgil,



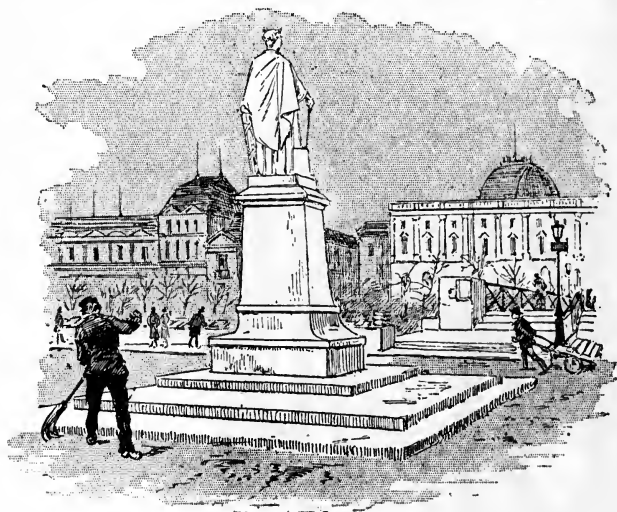
of Delille, of Thomson, of Saint Lambert, weep for his harvests and the work of a year lost in a day.

‘The only *Manuel du Libraire* studied by the stall-keeper is the physiognomy of the purchaser ; one smiles, another sighs, another knits his brows, another bites his lips ; a fifth, more troubled, will finger twenty volumes before he sets his hand on the book he desires ; and all betray

themselves in some way, which does not escape the bookstall-man, who is as acute and astute as an English ambassador.'

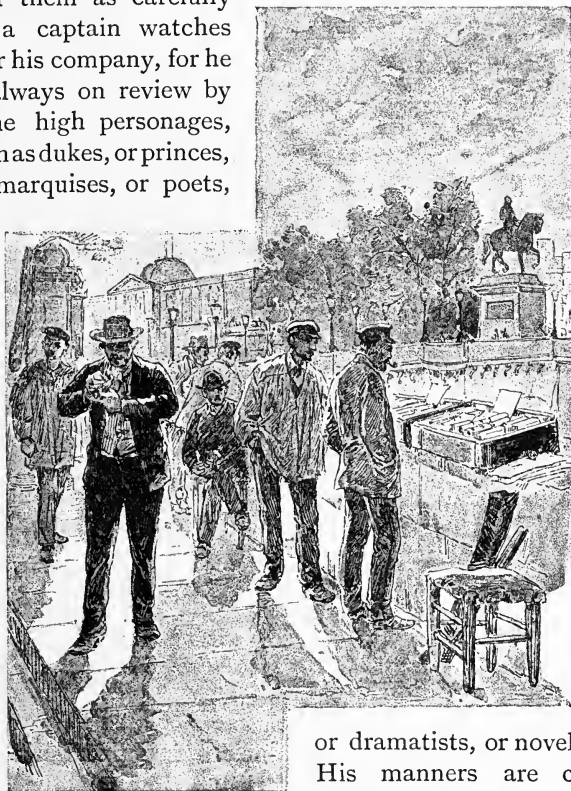
'In personal appearance,' says Bibliophile Jacob, 'the bookstall-man partakes of the condition of his books—exposed to all the vicissitudes of the weather, sprouted and shrivelled in the sun, beaten and dried by the wind, spotted and discoloured by the rain.'

What dear old Paul Lacroix does not say is, that the



bookstall-man varies according to his zones. On the Quai Voltaire, for instance, he is a gentleman in bearing and dignity. On the Quai Malaquais we are in the academic zone; the influence of the Institute is apparent; the dealer is more dogmatic, he discourses more on bibliographic matters, and the books he shows are in better condition. On the Quai Conti, literature triumphs and elevates the dignity of the profession; he knows that before reaching the Pont des Arts, or on coming down from it, the Im-

mortals will deign to honour his humble stall with a passing glance, and, as he knows them all, he is proud of the sympathy of some of them. His boxes are always in good order, his books are in line and right side up ; he watches over them as carefully as a captain watches over his company, for he is always on review by some high personages, such as dukes, or princes, or marquises, or poets,



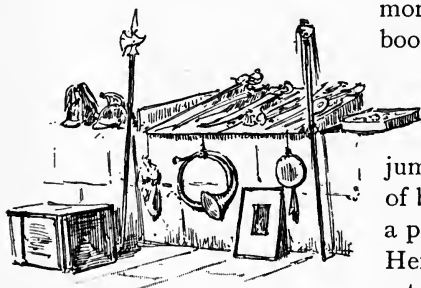
or dramatists, or novelists. His manners are cultivated ; affable and courteous, the bookstall-man of the Quai Conti is a good conversationalist and invariably well informed.

In the more popular zone of the Quai des Grands Augustins matters are more free-and-easy. The boxes

have a more cheerful look, and order is not so apparent ; the books are in picturesque disarray ; and as the shepherd generally assumes the physiognomy of his flock, the stall-keeper of these parts is less correct in his attire and less refined in his manners ; often he wears a blouse, and his boxes are filled with *feuilleton* stories, *Roret Manuels*, or even *Journaux des Dames* or *des Demoiselles*.

The Quai Saint Michel is, beyond all, the quay of the students ; many of the shopkeepers in front of it have stalls on the parapet ; there youth and art and literature reign. In all Paris that is the place where volumes of verse have the best chance of being welcomed by the gentle symbolists, or the fiery disciples of the romantic school, and the stall-keepers blend their stock accordingly.

A little higher up we reach the Pont Notre Dame, and light upon a sort of bazaar of antiquities, where we find



more old iron than old books. Here we have the music-dealers, the dealers in odds and ends of all kinds, jumbled up with piles of bric-à-brac that have a particularly odd look. Here Remonencq has set up as a stall-keeper ;

family portraits jostle old trombones, helmets of rusty iron, clocks bereaved of their faces, plated salt-cellar, and crockery more or less ancient in appearance but modern and counterfeit in reality. Now and then you may pick up something worth having. A friend of ours once unearthed here an excellent study of Carolus Duran, for which he paid two francs, and a Monticelli in his first manner, which cost him no more than a crown.

That is the last zone of the stall-keepers on which we propose to enter.

But a word for the medalist who displays, duly cata-



logued and ticketed, in handsome show-cases, coins and tokens in every metal, from bronze to gold, which gleam in the sun and are always worth looking at as you pass by. The proprietor of these glass cases is generally the prince of stall-keepers. The medalist is, in fact, fat, shiny, plump as a money-bag. His comrades in the book trade are thin, dry, and often bald; he is full-blooded, round, and hirsute. He is a capitalist—for medals on the quays sell at twenty-five francs, while prints and books rarely fetch more than two or three. The difference is great; but you only meet with two



medalists for a hundred bookstall men, and though it may be true that competition is the friend of commerce, it is only just to add that a specialty or a monopoly has always more money in it.

Let us return to our books, and say something of

THE BOOKSTALL-KEEPER IN HIS SHOP.

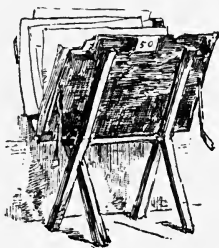
We have said above that the stalls with the best stock of books are generally in connection with the bookshops. Some of the bookstall-men are agitating against this state of things, against which they have a strong feeling, and they have formed a sort of committee which is always busy. This is the source of those fanciful paragraphs, occasionally appearing in the Paris papers, representing the quays as disturbed by a revolutionary spirit owing to the imaginary grievances of the stall-keepers against the bookshops opening branches on the parapets—or even taking the form of petitions to the Municipal Council, with the view of putting bookshelves on the parapet, rising to a height of 1 m. 25, with three rows on toothed racks—thus shutting out the view of the Seine.

These protesters are in a minority, but it is as well to listen to their complaints:

‘The position is becoming impossible,’ remarked, to a colleague of ours on the press, one of those humble stall-men who are to the high-class bookseller what the left-off-clothes dealer is to a tailor on the boulevards. ‘There will soon be no second-hand bookseller in the sense formerly understood; that is to say, a small bookseller dealing in all sorts of books, to whom the amateur in moderate circumstances could apply for the pearl to enrich his collection at a moderate price. To-day, sir, many of the booksellers have a shop in the street and a box on the quays.

‘My neighbour occupies, in the Rue de Seine, a house

of the second class, which is well known there. Should he not be content with his ordinary circle of customers, which are quite enough for him? But he must needs come and compete with us poor devils whose boxes are our only livelihood. Ah! if we only had the goods to compete with him on equal terms; but at the public sales and at the sales of dead men's books we have no chance of even a look in. These gentlemen have an understanding amongst themselves to keep us from getting even a bone to pick; they run the biddings up so high that we are quite out of it. The big plums, the rare books, the costly bindings, the proof engravings, we would gladly leave to them; for we cannot help it; but what do they want with the small fry—the books that are damaged, or of little value? Yet these people have a most ferocious appetite! They seize on these trifles of the sale-room and feed their boxes with them, while ours—look! it is miserable. Even purchases made for our customers are put beyond us; the booksellers will pay more than we can for every book they have a chance of selling again, and the customer naturally applies to them. How are we to keep our boxes stocked? How are we to struggle on? And many of my colleagues are family men!



These complaints are not without foundation. In fact the stations on the parapets ought not to be given, it would seem, but to applicants whose indigence is acknowledged; but certain booksellers manage to secure the best either by influence or by applying for them on behalf of their work-people or relatives.

For this reason, certain stall-holders last year thought of calling a meeting of their colleagues, to consider what measures should be taken against these shop-keeping

bookstall men. During the day a petition had been circulated which was covered with signatures; but in the evening the opponents of the agitation, seeing that they were in a majority, took action, and rendered the efforts of the protesters of no effect by voting for the *statu quo* in the following terms:

1. The second-hand booksellers assembled at 3, Boulevard Saint Michel, on the 3rd of July, 1891, tender their thanks to the Municipal Council for the favour accorded to them in permitting their stalls to remain at night on the parapets, and declare themselves satisfied with this improvement, and desire nothing more.

2. As regards the proposal for forming a society for mutual help, considering that there are not enough members of the trade for such an association to offer any advantages worth having; they pass to the order of the day.

3. As regards the proposal for delegating to a few persons the power of going to the public sales and purchasing books on behalf of the rest, considering that the action of such an association is illegal, and would render them open to prosecution; they pass to the order of the day.

4. As regards the complaints on the subject of the keepers of shops having stalls in addition, considering that most of these have become keepers of bookshops after having obtained their permission as keepers of stalls, and that it would be unjust to deprive them of an outlet probably indispensable; they pass to the order of the day.

From this it will be seen that most of the bookstall men were content to smother their professional jealousy to give effect to their ideas of justice. In fact, all they could ask the administration was for them to reserve the spaces at their disposal for applicants who were not in a position to open a more substantial shop. The booksellers already

established would then obtain no further concessions. But the abuse does not exist to the extent supposed ; and it has happened to many of the stall-keepers to be able, after some years, to take a little shop in the vicinity. This was the case with M. Corroenne on the Quai Voltaire, with Dorbon in the Rue Seine, with Sagot in the Rue Guénégaud, with Gougny on the Quai Conti, with Bridoux on the same quay ; and we may also mention Chacornac and Gibert on the Quay Saint Michel.

Others, without having shops in the street, have made enough money to fit up a room with a few shelves, where customers can come by appointment and pick out their books with more comfort than on the quay. These stall-keepers in a rather larger way find that this duplicate stock allows them to work on rainy days, and thus enjoy the just reward for their more active intelligence and more fortunate perseverance.

Occasionally, this increase in fortune comes from a marriage which, in default of a dowry, has procured the husband a valuable assistant in his wife, or perhaps from having come into a little money. But it has never been shown, though it would be easy to prove the contrary, that the stall is not the principal outlet, and, in fact, the indispensable drain for both establishments. To deprive them of the stall on the quay would be to deprive them of their cradle, and to punish them for having grown, and, more, to plunge them, perhaps, into ruin. It should also be said that it is the narrowest spirit of jealousy which leads certain stall-keepers to complain of the presence on the quays of these more fortunate colleagues, who are generally much harder and more meritorious workers.

In fact, far from being prejudiced against their neighbours, these bookshop stall-keepers do much towards keeping up the good name of the quays. They do not sell their books at low prices, and consequently do not compete

unfairly with the rest ; they stock their boxes, if not with rarities, at least with books in good condition ; at the public sales they are not formidable competitors, and that for two reasons, the first being that they find buying at the *marchés bourgeois* more lucrative than at the auction-room, and the second, that, having a better knowledge of books, they do not take part in those senseless *steepchases* in which certain ridiculous stall-keepers bid up books to double their real value. Thus the campaign undertaken unsuccessfully up to the present by two well-known leaders, and sustained by the incompetence of certain newspapers, is a campaign reasonable enough at first sight, but unintelligent and illiberal on closer acquaintance.

Among those who are at the head of the malcontents, there is, curious to relate, a former bookshop-keeper of education and immeasurable self-admiration (were we to name him, he would hurl against us a bull of bibliographic excommunication, in the form of a pamphlet or article difficult to place). This great apostle of the second-hand book has fallen from the bookshop to the quay, and that is why, out of rancour, he has vowed such hate against his old comrades.

This former shop was not particularly clean—it was near the Hôpital de la Charité—and amid an odour of dirt and a swarm of the infinitely little on the floor, you had to submit to the fastidious conversation of the Grand Lama of bibliography, preaching against the foolishness of the times. That was fifteen years ago—some of us remember it—and the master of the house was then at all times and under all circumstances recruiting at the door.

The temptation is great to take a stroll past the principal bookshops doing business on the quays, but it would take more than a chapter ; it would require a book to itself.

The Quai Voltaire and the Quai Malaquais would offer

many amusing sketches of men and booksellers; the Pillets, the Delaroques, the Paches, the Champions, the Porquet, Foulard et Cies., would furnish matter quite as amusing as the men on the Quai Conti and the Quai des Grands Augustins. The shop where lived, five years ago, that king

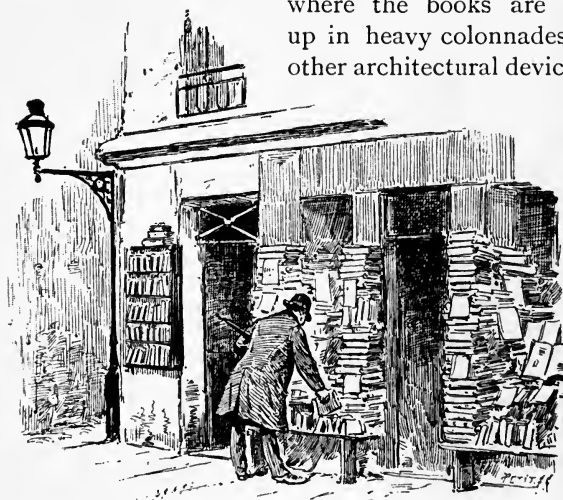
of bibliographers, the most learned man of his time, and most renowned among *bibliologues*, M. Claudin, is still in a wretched state in the Rue Guénégaud. This was the



strangest workshop that could be dreamt of. Outside, it was of the most forlorn aspect, with its facia half broken, its windows spotted with mud, its panels covered with dust; inside, under a fabulous heap of books, like an enchanter in his grotto, sat the worthy Claudin, with his face like some learned Dutchman's of the sixteenth century, his white beard and long silvery hair, working unceasingly, and informing visitors on every doubtful point, and on all cases of conscience in ancient book-selling.

Nowadays, Claudin lives in the Rue Dauphine, but has no shop. Everyone knows his catalogues, crammed with valuable notes, which we would be tempted to keep and collect if the dear man would only introduce more method into his classification of books, instead of giving his slips to the printer without any thought of classification whatever.

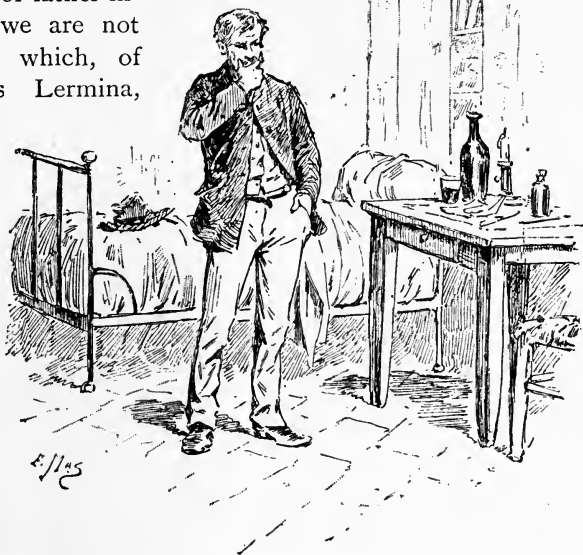
Almost opposite the Pont Neuf, the shop of Bridoux, where the books are piled up in heavy colonnades and other architectural devices, is



worthy of notice, for assuredly no artistic bibliophile has dreamt of the fine etching that a Méryon could have made of this surprising portico of old books.

Every shop on the Quai des Grands Augustins is also worthy of a monograph, and when we reach the Quai Saint Michel, we should have the pleasure of staying a few moments with Vanier, the publisher of children's books, whose establishment is so cheerful-looking, so distinctive, so prettily decorated with men of the day, so interesting from the crowd around it during the afternoon.

At Jolly's, too, we should also stop, for Jolly is a specialist very much alive to modern ideas of art and literature, and keeps a large stock of contemporary prints, original drawings, in water-colour and oil, to say nothing of the books a little above commonplace, which bear the names of all the somebodies and none of the anybodies of the day. Chacornac, son-in-law or father-in-law we are not sure which, of Jules Lermina,



has also, close to Jolly's, a very well-chosen array, which we can salute as we pass.

These stall-keepers at their shops are but an incident in the course of our promenade along the quays; they are somewhat of aristocrats among our dear stall-keepers, to whom we must return to add a paragraph indispensable to their physiology, under the heading of:

HOW TO BECOME A BOOKSTALL-KEEPER.

During the last ten years the number of stall-keepers, which, up to 1860, had remained almost stationary, has doubled at the very least. It may be remarked that in times of crisis the small industries have more tendency to develop than the larger ones; employment is not so easily got, and it is more sought after by the victims of the general depression, and a greater number of people are reduced to have recourse to expedients. We need search for no other motives for the incessant increase of so many poor, out-of-door stall-keepers. The outlook at having to pass your life exposed to the inclemencies of the weather without any really adequate pecuniary compensation can only be tempting to such as are hard up. And the proof of this is that, with two or three exceptions, the fifty stall-keepers who have been successively installed on the quays during the ten years belong to almost every profession, administrative or commercial, but not one of them—will it be believed?—has had any previous knowledge of bookselling or the allied trades.

There are not a few who think that the second-hand bookseller has no need of special knowledge and little need of money to begin with; some even think the amount of work required is hardly worth mention, and, imbued with these ideas, people come from all parts applying for a stall-space, obtaining it, and regretting bitterly after a time that they did not seek another channel in their terrible struggle with life.

After being the delight—like the *bleus* in the army—of the unscrupulous booksellers who have made a good thing out of their ignorance, they at length find out their mistake; they see their books sell very slowly without their being able to meet their daily expenditure or keep up their stock by attending the sales. Then they take a juster

view of the difficulties of the position, and, if they are ill adapted for adversity, become hot and strong revolutionists, nursing unjust resentment against their colleagues and the pleasant passers-by who buy books at other stalls than theirs.

Before the repeal of the *loi sur la librairie* and the suppression of the indentures the bookstall men were under the same vexatious regulations as the booksellers in the shops.

To-day it matters not to what class or trade they belong in order to secure a stall, which they proceed to do in this way :

They send to the Préfet of the Seine, on loose paper, an application generally couched in the following terms :



‘ MONSIEUR LE PRÉFET,

‘ I have the honour to solicit of your kindness the grant of space for a bookstall on the quays.

‘ The grounds on which I seek this favour are,’ etc. (and then follow the details of the applicant’s character, experience and position).

In about a fortnight’s time the applicant, if successful, receives from the municipal office of the *mairie* of the Seventh Arrondissement, or from that of the Fourth, if his application refers to the right bank, a notice to present himself, accompanied by an authority from the prefecture of police, at the said *mairie* between two o’clock and four o’clock on business that



concerns him. The authority given by the Prefecture of Police is the same as that given to hawkers who sell newspapers and other printed matter on the boulevards and in the streets. It is given, on proof of identity, by the head of the Second Bureau, M. May.

Ten years ago the authority was given under the following conditions, and we think they still hold good :

1. To sell only at a fixed price, arranging the books in boxes bearing an indication of the uniform price of the volumes contained in each box. It is understood that the figure indicating this price is to be so placed as to be well in view.

2. To keep exactly to the spot assigned by the Préfet of the Seine, and to occupy it in person.

3. To return all books belonging to public establishments, and those offered by unknown or suspicious persons, and to forward them within twenty-four hours to the commissary of police of the district.

4. To produce the present permission whenever required to do so by any officer of the administration, or anyone authorized to demand it.

5. To give notice of every change of residence within the following week on pain of the immediate withdrawal of the permission.

In addition to this it is expressly forbidden—

1. To sell or expose for sale books or pamphlets contrary to good manners or public order.

2. To sell new books, to keep a shop, and to carry on any other industry than that specified in the present permission.

3. To expose for public sale any new pamphlets, writings, engravings, medals, prints, drawings, emblems, or lithographs, without the authority first obtained, con-

formably to the Police Ordinance of the 20th of June, 1849, and to the decree of the 17th of February, 1852, and a previous deposit in duplicate with the Controller-General at the Prefecture of Police.

4. To lend, give, hire out, or sell this permission, the title to which will be considered as lapsed if at any time it remains for a month without being used.

The present permission can be renewed from year to year.

The grantee must present it during the month of January in every year for the said renewal.

The permission will be revoked the same day that any failure is made in complying with any of the conditions under which it is granted.

Furnished with this paper and his authority, the book-stall man presents himself at the *mairie* of the Seventh or Fourth Arrondissement, and there an official known as a *piqueur*, who is specially attached to the service of the quays, puts a plan before him and asks him to choose among the spaces that are vacant. When he has decided on this, the *piqueur* makes an appointment to meet him in the morning on the quay and put him into possession. The object of this is that the *piqueur* may assure himself that the place taken is really the one selected, and also that the new-comer may some days before he begins business make acquaintance with his neighbours, who are cautioned to leave vacant the space that while it was unclaimed they had shared between them.

The spaces allotted are invariably ten mètres in length on the quays when the stalls succeed each other without a break (that is, on the Quais Voltaire, Malaquais, Conti, Grands Augustins, Saint Michel); the spaces are marked by black bars running from the top to the bottom of the parapet. Between each place there is a space of two

mètres, similarly marked, which has to be left free by the stall-keeper, to allow of the public taking a rest or looking over on to the river; but this is almost always shared between the stalls in order to increase their length a little. The passer-by can always protest as much as he likes, and take his rest between two stalls if he feels himself in a vein for idyllic verses addressed to the river whose waters are so much calumniated. But the boxes



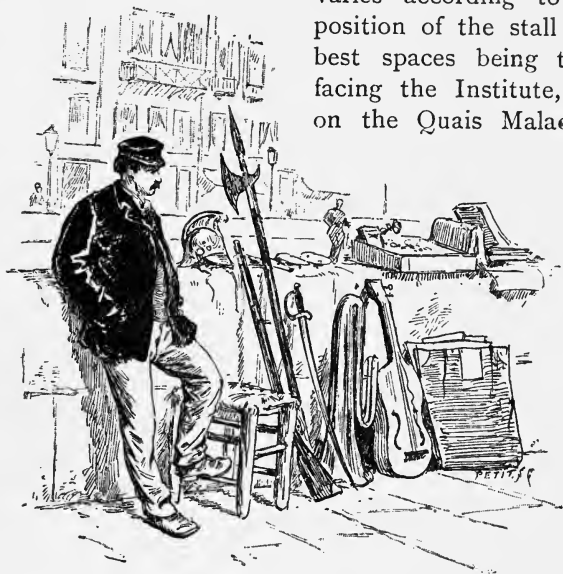
do not shut out the view, and the Parisian banks can very well be admired without disarranging the books.

No one can obtain more than one space. A few stall-keepers, however, have two or three, but these are taken in another name than theirs, by their wives or children.]

Since 1860, every bookstall-keeper pays to the town of Paris an annual rent of twenty-five francs, which,

augmented by additional centimes and the stamp, totals up to 26 fr. 35. Being classed as a broker, he is in addition liable to a license costing twenty-five francs, so that his annual contribution amounts altogether to 51 fr. 35.

The income realized by the possessors of the boxes varies according to the position of the stall (the best spaces being those facing the Institute, and on the Quais Malaquais



and Saint Michel), and, above all, according to the condition of the goods (and Heaven knows there is often great room for improvement in that!)

On an average they earn from seven to ten francs a day, principally in the spring and autumn. In the memory of the bookstall man there have been very few of his colleagues who have retired on a fortune. Those who leave their boxes at the call of death are much more numerous.

Everything is not rosy in the trade, it must be admitted.

Besides the loss resulting from the sale of volumes below the cost price, or remaining unsold, and without speaking of the winter season, with its chances of colds and bronchitis to run away with the takings (if the whole day is not entirely lost by the bad weather), the police often take a glance into the boxes in search of stolen books or interdicted publications, and this means another source of loss to these unhappy traders. It is only fair to add that the stall-keepers are cautious by profession, and rarely display such works as are considered immoral; these they reserve for particular purchasers, certain *érotobibliomaniacs* whom they know well and with whom they only trade with closed doors.

And now let us yield ourselves to the demonstrative joys of ingenious statistics.

In his *Voyage Littéraire sur les Quais* in 1864, M. A. Fontaine de Resbecq stated that there were sixty-eight bookstall-keepers on the quays of Paris, from the Pont Royal to the Pont Marie and on the Quai de la Tournelle; he discovered, but with regrettable mistakes in his calculation, 1,020 boxes, containing 70,000 volumes altogether; that is to say, the value of three fairly important provincial libraries.

Herewith—some twenty-eight years later—is our result after a personal investigation :

LEFT BANK.

Quai d'Orsay, 2 stall-keepers, 28 boxes.

Quai Voltaire, 23 stall-keepers, 205 boxes.

Quai Malaquais, 30 stall-keepers, 360 boxes (including 1 stall of pasteboards and 1 stall of spectacles).

Quai Conti, 24 stall-keepers, 282 boxes (including 1 stall of engraved stones, 1 of coins, and 1 of postage stamps).

Quai des Grands Augustins, 36 stall-keepers, 360 boxes (including 3 stalls of coins and 2 of antiquities).

Quai Saint Michel, 17 stall-keepers, 142 boxes.

Quai Montebello, 5 stall-keepers, 25 boxes (including 1 stall of pictures and curiosities).

Pont Sully, 2 stall-keepers (one of whom sells bric-à-brac).

RIGHT BANK.

Quai de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, 6 stall-keepers, 72 boxes.

Quai de Gesvres, 3 stall-keepers, 38 boxes.

Quai de la Mégisserie, 2 stall-keepers, 19 boxes.

Quai du Louvre, 4 stall-keepers, 71 boxes.

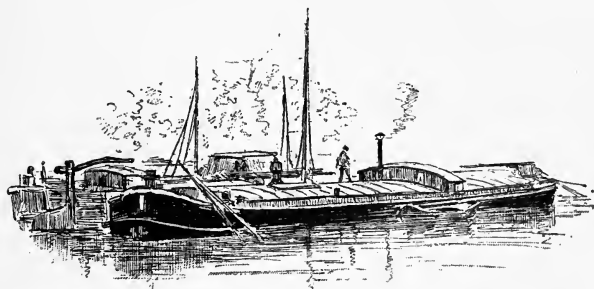
Quai des Tuileries, 1 stall-keeper, 16 boxes.

CITY.

Quai des Orfèvres, 1 stall-keeper, 16 boxes.

Total: 156 stall-keepers and 1,636 boxes. Without reckoning the few bookstall men who encroach on the vacant spaces, we have thus, on allowing 10 metres for each stall, a length of 1,560 metres of parapet, covered with books contained in 1,636 boxes. Each box contains on the average 60 volumes, and this gives us 97,260 volumes exposed clearly to the public gaze in 1892.

Averaging the takings of the bookstall men at ten francs a day, which cannot be far wrong, we find that the 156 stall-keepers take 1,560 francs a day, or 569,400 a year — more than half a million. Are not statistics sublime!





THE TRADE IN BOOKS

ON THE PARIS QUAYS.



EVIDENTLY this vastly comprehensive title must be limited by the sub-title, 'On the Paris Quays.'

Here, again, we cannot do better than avail ourselves of the information afforded by one or two of our friends of the parapets. For as a judge of jewellery there is only M. Josse, and if we must trust someone, it is 'Robert in the things in which he experiments'; at least, so says Molière and the wisdom of nations.

Besides, we know that our confidence is not blind. We also have had some experience, sufficient at least to check the statements (which interest and prejudice might occasionally falsify) of those in the trade, to add a few features collected by personal observation, and also to

submit the question in its entirety, in detail and as a whole, to our very free and enlightened judgment.

The trade on the quays would, it is generally admitted by those interested, be sufficiently remunerative if the stall-keepers had greater facilities for replenishing their stock of books. The quays are frequented by people to whom books are necessary tools no less than objects of passionate curiosity; and if a stall were always stocked with interesting books the proprietor would find his daily receipts enough to yield him a 'reasonable' income. We shall see further on to what the modesty of his wants and ambition reduces the meaning of this epithet.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Many stall-keepers sell nothing, and are miserable because they find nothing good to buy. The boxes are fed by purchases on the quay, or by purchases at the houses of the vendors, or at the public sales.

Of these three modes, the purchase at the house is the most profitable, and is, consequently, that which the bookstall-keeper prefers. This purchase is accidental; generally it is the sick or those dying without heirs who sell their little library, for periodical sales are of the rarest. Happy is he who has the studies of five or six amateurs or men of letters to clear occasionally of the waste and overflow! He can renew his stock, and by the side of old books of interest can place alluring novelties, giving a variety to his stall which attracts and retains the passer-by.



This chance does not fall to everybody. The place occupied, the look of the boxes, and, above all, the general

appearance of the dealer, have enormous influence in the formation of a circle of sellers.

The persons who desire to sell, either by bringing their books themselves, or by making an appointment with the dealer at their houses, generally arrive on the quay by a bridge, or by one of the main roads on the left bank which open on to the bridges. The corner stalls are, therefore, the most frequently visited by those who have books to sell. Let us add that it is easier to speak privately at the end of a stall, and that people who come to trade do not care to take the public into their confidence, and be obliged to carry on their bargaining within earshot of the neighbouring stall-keepers or the loungers who are on the alert for information as they explore the boxes.

It is noticeable that some people do not care to sell but to dealers who look simple and seedy. They imagine they can obtain a better price from a man of simple mind whom misery has made timid. This is the reasoning of a very poor psychologist, and the result is almost always a deception. The dealer who looks a simpleton is most frequently doubly wide awake, and he who clothes himself in rags has often several good bank-notes in his greasy wallet. In any case he knows their strength and how to use them. He knows how to beat down a price with a patience that nothing can shake, and a passivity and inertia which ends in the customer abandoning the struggle in discouragement and disgust. These men are never carried away by their feelings, never have those outbursts of frankness and generosity to which dealers of a more ardent temperament and brighter disposition are always more or less subject.

For others the stall itself is the touchstone which will reveal in the dealer the buyer they seek.

Observant and logical, they proceed with method, examining the dominant character of each stall, and address-

ing themselves to the stall-keeper whose particular class of books corresponds most closely with those they wish to sell. If they are not mistaken in their opinion they find a dealer ready to buy books he can sell, and consequently to pay well for them. The secret is to drop the right book in the right place.

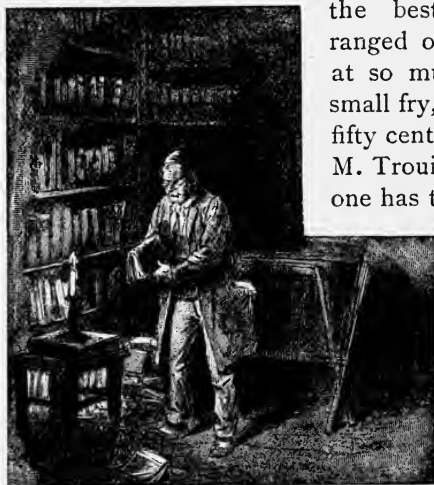
The journalists and critics to whom the publishers always send copies of new books have all one or two special booksellers who periodically disencumber them of the heap of new volumes, often uncut, and now and then ornamented with dedications which some of them have not even the delicacy to tear out or obliterate. The advantage formerly presented by this branch of trade no longer exists except in the case of books of medicine, law, science or technology. These are sure to sell, and at fairly good prices. But verse and current literature are worthless as far as the bookstall man is concerned. This is not the place to dilate on the considerations that affect the price of books; but there are many volumes published at 3 fr. 50 which are offered on all sides and fail to find purchasers at 8 or 10 sous, and which have to be bought for nothing to yield any profit at all. The bookstall man who would formerly take the lot at prices varying from 75 centimes to 1 fr. 25 a volume, now goes carefully through the books one by one, and when he has put aside those by Zola, Ohnet, Daudet, Maupassant and three or four other authors of secondary importance according to the tastes of his customers, he will offer so much—very little, after all—and declare that he will take the others thrown into the bargain. There is discussion, resistance, refusal, trial elsewhere, and after a loss of time and patience in three or four similar essays, a total surrender is made to the last man called in, and he takes the lot. Herein is a small source of revenue to men of letters, who are all more or less reviewers; and a trifling profit to the

bookstall-keepers, who prefer to pay for a book 25 sous and sell it for 35, rather than buy it for 20 centimes and not sell it at all.

We may class among the house purchases the transactions of a few bookstall-keepers who pay regular visits to the waste-paper dealers in the vicinity.

Some years ago one of these dealers, M. Trouillet, whose warehouse was in the Rue de Furstemberg, did a considerable trade with the stall-keepers.

M. Trouillet bought in small quantities everywhere: in private houses, in the public offices, in the colleges; he also frequented the public sales, and every day waggons of books were unloaded at his offices. He divided them into three parts: the papers first, which went to be torn up; then the saleable books, the best of which were ranged on shelves and sold at so much each; then the small fry, which were sold at fifty centimes a kilogramme. M. Trouillet is dead, and no one has taken his place.



Another waste-paper merchant named Martin, in the Rue Mazarine, still receives the visits of the stall-keepers, who find occasional treasures in an inextricable and picturesque jumble of things without a name.

tricable and picturesque jumble of things without a name.

An expert from the Hôtel des Ventes, M. Guil, has or

had in the Rue Serpente a store from which he supplied booksellers and the bookstall-keepers ; but the latter are not very anxious to do business at a price which gives them no hope of an honest profit. It must not be forgotten that a stall-keeper on the quays must of necessity sell more cheaply than a bookseller in a shop, however humble it may be.

Many years ago there died in the Rue Bonaparte, in the house of the bookseller Leroux, M. le Vicomte de Lastic Saint-Jal. This chip of the old rock was a private second-hand bookseller, and contrived to make money at the trade. Every afternoon he took a turn round Paris, visiting the dealers in bric-à-brac, the waste-paper merchants, the schools, even the convents, to which his name gave him admission. He promised commissions to intermediaries, and offered his services direct to amateurs desirous of getting rid of their books, whether valuable or not. It thus happened that every day he had a quantity of fresh books with him, and that the bookstall-keepers visited him every morning. They had to be on their guard against him. Not only did his title and education have their effect on some, but he knew the value of a book as well as any bookseller in the trade ; and when he saw the customer well prepared, aglow so to speak, he would ask for a hundred-sous lot, perhaps twenty or five-and-twenty francs. Nothing was more difficult than to come away from him empty-handed. Sometimes in order to get out of the claws of this worthy man they would offer him an absurd price for a book, and were surprised to find him instantly accept the proposal. But once they were outside they would invariably discover that this ridiculous price was quite reasonable, and that he had succeeded for an instant in thoroughly misleading them as to the real value of the book.

He was very free in his details as to his birth, his life,

and his works. He was pleased to relate that in England he was looked upon as one of the most learned men in France, and that his excavations and the works he had originated were far superior to those of Boucher de Perthes or the Marquis de Nadaillac. If the conversation was pressed, it would appear that he was the greatest chess-player in France, and that at one time he had met all Paris at the *Café de la Régence*. To listen to

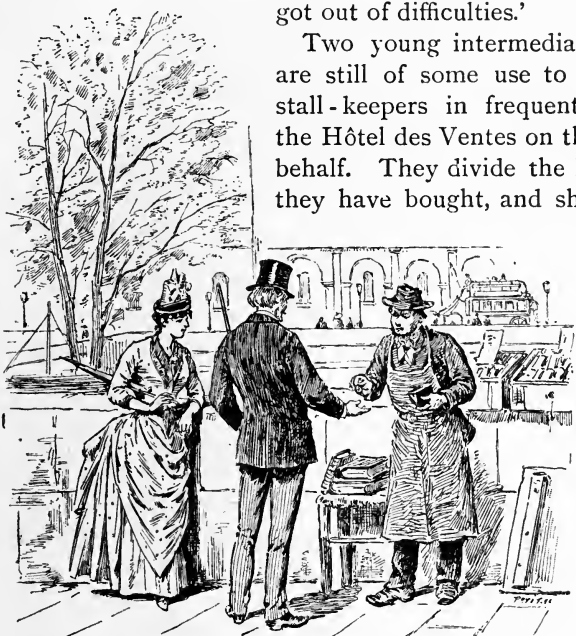


him, he rendered inestimable services to those to whom he had the honour to sell books. 'Had he not made the fortune of Dorbon, then a bookseller in the Rue Bona-

parte, and contributed to that of Rouquette and Fontaine, without mentioning Morgand? As to poor Doumaine, the military bookseller, it was too evident that without M. de

Lastic he would never have got out of difficulties.'

Two young intermediaries are still of some use to the stall-keepers in frequenting the Hôtel des Ventes on their behalf. They divide the lots they have bought, and share



them out among the stall-keepers in accordance with the preferences they are known to have for special kinds of books. They do their work intelligently, and seek only a moderate profit, which they are always sure of obtaining, though the stall-keeper may have to pay rather more than he is accustomed to. The arrangement is convenient, and its convenience makes it pay.

Books offered directly by private persons to the stall-keepers are rather rare. On Sundays, however, when it is fine, couples may be seen descending the Seine, the woman gaily dressed, her eyes bright, her mouth smiling, the man carrying under his free arm a dozen books, and looking pleased enough as he turns towards the country, and anxious enough as he glances along the quays. Such are students, artists, clerks, young fellows longing to get out of town, and inconveniently out of cash.

They may be fortunate enough to apply to some worthy fellow in whom their youth and gaiety awake sweet memories of the past; and then instead of taking advantage of their haste and excitement he will strain a point, and reduce his probable profit by some twenty or thirty sous if he can in any way add to the pleasure which the two lovers are promising themselves.

At one time a student would come with a bundle of books—class books, translations, romances—at the end of a strap. It was a holiday, perhaps, and he was in want of a few sous to smoke cigars and drink bocks till he grew sick in the beer-saloons of the quarter. Books from this source are generally suspected; and the prudent stall-keeper,

would not fail to examine them carefully, and return them with a 'That does not suit me,' accompanied by a severe look, should he discover the stamp of a *lycée* or some other establishment. The best thing is to refuse in all such cases, students—with the exception of a few *cagneux*, *carrés*, or *cubes*—not being responsible persons, and the obligations to pay at their



houses being necessarily a dead letter as far as they are concerned.

Besides, their chance acquisitions are rarely of much good to the bookstall man, unless a valuable book has slipped into the bundle through the ignorance or haste of the sellers. But such a windfall occurs only once in a thousand times. As a rule the stall-keeper would not gain a living by buying small lots, the books being difficult of sale, and those which have been lost or stolen never realizing the profit that might be expected.

On the other hand, it is not agreeable, even to a hardened dealer, to offer 50 centimes for a volume which has been bought new for 3 fr. 50 or 5 francs; and yet this price of 50 centimes, which seems so ridiculous to the seller, is often more than the real value to the bookstall man, who has to regulate his prices at half what he can sell for at the very most. This buying at half-price is a law to him.

If, for instance, we take the average sum he realizes during a year, we shall find it work out at 15 francs a day at the most. By buying at half this, his gross profit is 7 fr. 50, from which we must deduct from 1 fr. 50 to 2 francs for working expenses. It is only just that he should realize enough to keep the pot boiling; the cause of the plethora in the savings banks is not to be sought among the bookstall men.

There remains a third source of supply, the public sales.

The stall-keepers do not despise these; but they can only avail themselves of them with difficulty, and their ventures at them are small. The sales *en ville* and at the Hôtel de la Rue Drouot take place during the day, and consequently those only can attend them who can leave a deputy at their stall, or those who, in the hope of some fortunate purchase, think it worth while to shut up their

boxes for the day. And among them there are not many dogs who leave the prey for another.

The large sales, too, rarely offer much for the stall-keepers to bite at ; valuable books, catalogued, classified, priced, and eagerly sought after by the taste or vanity of collectors, are not in their line. All the spare capital of most of them would hardly amount to the price of a good copy of the *Chansons* of La Borde.

The sales they seek are the quieter ones, with small catalogues or no catalogues at all, in which the books are offered in parcels. These parcels contain a good deal of waste, no doubt ; there are many books in them that are absolutely valueless, but they often contain two or three volumes each of which is worth the money paid for the lot.

However constant a stall-keeper may be in his attendance at the sales, he cannot trust to them as the only means of replenishing his stock. For half the year they would fail him ; during the season he would have to buy enough to last him for the twelve months. But very few would be strong enough to stand such a lock-up of capital.

And the Hôtel des Ventes is unapproachable by the isolated dealer. The booksellers are too keen at their 'revision.' Since Rochefort published the *Petits Mystères de l'Hôtel des Ventes*, everyone knows in what this honest and lucrative operation consists. When the booksellers in the league have acquired, by arrangement with the man who does not bid, the majority of the lots at the very lowest prices, while they have run the others up above their value at the expense of the obstinate amateur or the trader who does not belong to their alliance, they meet at a café or at some room specially reserved for them ; the booty is brought there and the revision begins. The books are again put up to auction among those present ; each man

runs up the price of all books he wants as high as he can, irrespective of what they may have cost at the public sale. When all is over the difference between the two prices is shared amongst the company, as is also the loss, should there be any, though this is an occurrence of some rarity. It follows that there is no need to buy a single lot to share in the profit: all that is necessary is to be one of the members of this species of syndicate. And, in fact, there are certain booksellers who go to the room as if to their club, and daily realize their little 'equivalent.' There is one stall-keeper on the Quai Malaquais, whom we need not name, who is reported to be one of the most active members of this league, but he is certainly an exception.

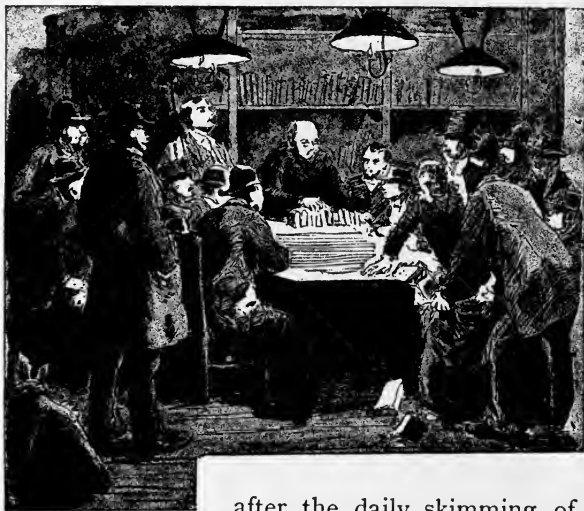
Revision is not so easily practised at the *Bons Enfants* (Salles Sylvestre), or at the Salle Claudin in the Rue Dauphine; there books only are sold. The sales take place in the evening. The second-hand booksellers come there from every corner of Paris, and their number and the diversity of their interests hardly permits of a league being successfully formed.

The sales at Claudin's become less and less frequent. We do not even know if this excellent man, enthusiastic bookseller, and learned bibliographer of the old school, who gave his name to the rooms, is still at work. In any case the room is not open more than four or five times a year. The old Maison Sylvestre, Rue des Bons Enfants, is, on the other hand, a very active centre for book sales, which take place every evening almost without interruption. Since Messrs. Em. Paul, L. Huart and Guillemin, the successors of Labitte, Paul and Co., left the bookshop on the Rue de Lille to give their whole attention to the Maison Sylvestre, the sale-rooms, which were formerly of excessively primitive and naked simplicity, have undergone many necessary transformations. The arrangements, the warming, the lighting, are now what they ought to be, and

the books, which used to be spread out on the floor, are on tables handy for sale purposes or removal.

The Sylvestre rooms are, as we have already said, the great meeting-place of the stall-keepers, and our physiognomy of the quays would be incomplete were we not to include a few photographic scenes from them.

Let us attend the sale in which Guil, whom we have already mentioned, annually clears out the remainders



after the daily skimming of the cream by the stall-keepers. M. Delestre, who shares with M. Boulland the honour and pleasure of acting as auctioneer at the Sylvestre sales, wields the hammer this evening. Guil naturally acts as expert. The company is not very large, and consists entirely of the poorer stall-keepers. The others are on the first-floor, where the room has a better assortment.

'Come, gentlemen!' shouts the expert, 'we are going to begin. We will sell you a considerable number of

pamphlets and damaged volumes; look at those in that corner over there. I want thirty francs. You will bid, will you not, Chevalier?’

‘I will bid three francs,’ says Chevalier impassively.

‘Well, gentlemen, the bid is three francs,’ says the auctioneer.

‘Fifty.’

‘Four.’

‘Fifty.’

‘Come, gentlemen, there are at least 150 kilos of paper.’

‘Five.’

‘Fifty.’

‘They are worth more than that. Come, Leon, there is something good for you in that lot.’

‘Come, five fifty for Leon?’

‘Never in my life.’

‘Four francs,’ says Grandjean.

‘Come, gentlemen, no joking; we are at five fifty.’

‘No! no! five francs for me.’

‘Who said five fifty? Anybody? Well, gentlemen, does anybody say more? Are you agreed? Gone, five francs, Chevalier.’

And Chevalier observes, with a chuckle, ‘There is more than ten francs’ worth of paper.’

But the sale has to proceed, and the corner must be cleared. The biddings are now heavier. Listen!

‘We are selling three parcels of books, about forty volumes in each; all good authors, gentlemen.’

‘Don’t mention it!’

‘Come! six francs?’

‘Twenty sous.’

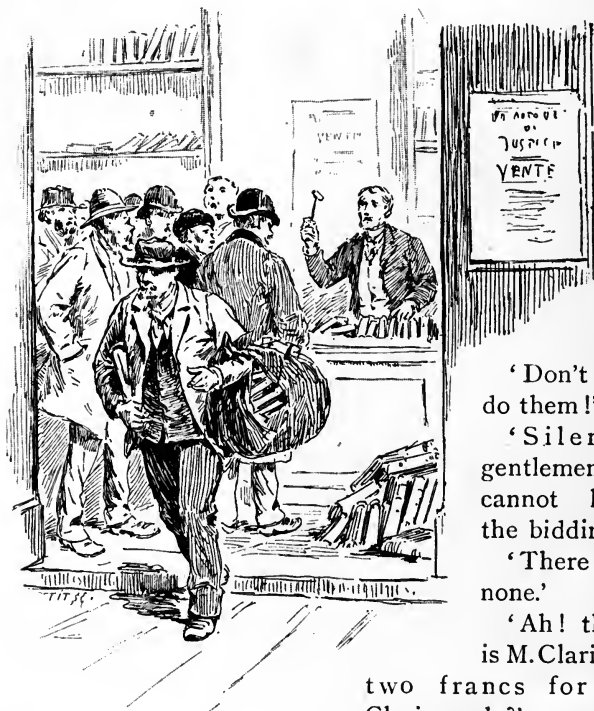
The expert is indignant.

‘I would bid thirty sous!’ he exclaims. ‘Come, gentlemen. I will bid 1 fr. 50. Who will better that? Will

no one go above 1 fr. 50? Come, gentlemen, 120 volumes for 1 fr. 50. Jules, undo a parcel; they have not seen them.'

'Yes, yes. Don't undo them!'

'Undo them!'



'Don't undo them!'

'Silence, gentlemen; I cannot hear the biddings.'

'There are none.'

'Ah! there is M. Clarisse; two francs for M. Clarisse, eh?'

'How many parcels?'

'Three—120 volumes.'

'It is too dear.'

'Gone!—1 fr. 50, M. Guil.'

The expert is sold, and smiles bitterly.

'We will now sell six parcels, also forty volumes each, all good authors.'

'Twenty sous.'

'Well, gentlemen, are they not worth a franc?'

'Well, yes; two francs.'

'Fifty.'

'Hundred sous.'

It is Ernest who has entered, and in front of the pile of books made this marvellous bid.

The lot is his.

And so it will continue until the close. Sometimes the parcels of forty volumes will go as low as ten sous, sometimes they will rise as high as four or five francs on the arrival of a few stall-keepers who have their day's takings to buy with.

At the end of the sale the total will amount to 150 francs or thereabouts for 120 lots, containing some 4,000 volumes.

The sale is over; the elect tie up their bundles, and then go up to the first-floor to take a turn in Room No. 1.

Then the scene changes: the bookseller element is to the fore; booksellers of little importance nevertheless, for the sale is still in lots, and the amateurs finding nothing to do have left the field clear for the dealers.

At the invasion of the stall-keepers from below there is an uproar. Bloch suddenly pulls away the chair from Girard, who sits down suddenly on the floor. The expert, M. Paquet, laughs, and waits until silence is restored, to put on the table a parcel containing, according to him, as many marvels as volumes. Each volume is announced separately, and the bidding begins.

But here the bidding is fast and furious; one would imagine they were around a board of green cloth. The bids go up, up; and the forty volumes which downstairs would have fetched ten sous here reach ten francs.

The sales by catalogue attract a more serious and less noisy crowd. Sometimes, however, they degenerate into a farce, as at Dr. Legrand du Saulle's sale, for instance.

It seemed on that occasion as though a gale of folly had swept down on the library of the famous mad doctor, and struck madness into the company.

The wind was raised by the agency of M. Fontaine.

He was unfamiliar with the *Bons Enfants*, and announced that all the lots purchased must be paid for immediately—which is never done, for the payments are made at the close of the sale.

Sometimes the buyers ask for an account, which the auctioneer never refuses, although it is equivalent to a few weeks' credit.

This declaration gave rise to a murmur among the audience, which foreboded a storm.

The first four or five lots were knocked down, and the cashier, anxious to obey his orders, and seeing nothing coming, asked for the money.

'M. Girard! Three francs, if you please.'

'What is the matter?'

'Three francs, if you please.'

'I will pay at the end of the sale.'

M. Fontaine, with the air of a president of assizes, remarks:

'Sir, it is understood here that everybody is on a footing of equality, and therefore I beg you will pay at once.'

'That is ridiculous, sir.'

'Sir, do not insult me, or I will have you put out.'

Hilarity begins.

Fontaine, perceiving hostility in the air, resumes his discourse.

'Gentlemen, if I ask you to pay up at once, it is not

that I doubt most of you, whom I know, but because there are others whom I do not know. That is why I repeat that, with the sole object of putting you all on a footing of equality, I must ask you to pay at once.'

'Can you give us an account?'

'We can, M. Marescq.'

'How much do I owe?'

'Six francs fifty.'

'There is a thousand francs.'

The room roars. The auctioneer bites his lips.



'We will give you the change at the close of the sale, Monsieur Marescq.'

'Not at all. I want it now.'

At this moment a thick smoke fills the room.

'Chevalier, there is something burning here. See what it is.'

They look and discover nothing. They open the windows. The smoke disappears, and the shivering company proceed with the bidding.

‘Who has hidden my *cuiller*?’

At this question, asked in a tone of anguish, the whole room goes into fits.

The *cuiller* or ladle is a wooden bowl, used in certain bazaars to collect payments at a distance.

During the hour the sale has been open, not ten articles have been sold.

However, silence is apparently restored, and the expert hazards another lot.

The smoke recommences thicker than ever. Some of the crowd are seriously alarmed, others are shaking with smothered laughter.

There is another search, but nothing is found. At last a new arrival shows Chevalier a mass of paper alight in the passage, which is being poked about so as to give much or little smoke as required.

And now a loud shouting is heard; Chevalier, the porter of the room, is fighting with Belin, the book-seller.

‘What is the matter, gentlemen?’

Chevalier roars, while Belin exclaims in the voice of a schoolboy who ‘sneaks’:

‘M’sieur, he says I hid the *cuiller*.’

Here those who are weak in the lungs have to run outside to breathe.

In a feeble way the sale continues.

A lot is knocked down to an unknown.

‘Three francs to Monsieur——’

‘I will pay.’

‘That is nothing to do with it. Your name?’

‘I will pay.’

Hereupon the crier thinks he overhears the name, and says, ‘M. Ompet.’

‘Certainly not!’ says the impatient auctioneer, amid another burst of merriment. ‘Your name, sir!’

The bidder is silent, while an unknown voice squeaks out, 'M. Lavigne.'

'M. Lavigne!'

And on the list is entered the name of M. Lavigne against the lot bought by M. Dancourt.

Suddenly there is a disputed bid.

'It is mine!' says Chevalier.

'Not at all. I bid 2 fr. 50,' says Espagne. Then, thinking better of it, 'Oh! I will leave it with you.'

'No, no, I leave it to you.'

'Ah, come, gentlemen, are we here to amuse ourselves? Let us get on.'

Oh, the innocence of auctioneers! The worthy man suspected nothing!

But he could not help doing so before long, for at eleven o'clock the catalogue, which contained 160 lots, had not been got through.

When a stall-keeper, at a public sale or otherwise, has bought a lot of books, he examines them at home, and if he understands his trade, proceeds as follows. He carefully puts aside the books which appear to be of the kind that suits the bookseller with whom he has dealings. Then he sorts out the rest according to the prices he has paid for them, so as to fill up the vacancies as they occur in his priced boxes. The volumes put aside for the booksellers are not marked. They are taken to the shop, or if a visit is expected from the bookseller, they are put on one side on the quay until he comes. The price is then agreed upon, and the bargaining never takes long. With the exception of books out of print or books of the past, which are subject to much variation in value, the bookseller generally pays from fifty to sixty per cent. under full price.

This percentage is not willingly accepted by outsiders,

who are always eager to keep the market price as high as possible; and hence the preference given to the book-sellers by the stall-keepers, and the reason why a good book never remains long on the parapets.

The books not taken by the book-shops go to fill up the gaps in the boxes. Some stall-keepers have only boxes at various prices, and mark their books in pencil inside. It does not appear that this system increases the chances of sale. A book will remain for months in a box of various prices, that would go in a day if it were marked in plain figures, even at the price originally asked. The customer likes to know at once what he is expected to pay if he finds anything that suits him in the box he is examining. It is simply annoying, to say nothing of the loss of time, to have to open every volume to see what you are expected to give for it.

This is not all. There is a descending scale down which every unsold book must go, to the disgust of the stall-keeper. But why? Is it worth while to keep the higher-priced boxes full of unsaleables rather than sacrifice the expected profit, and perhaps lose everything? The truth is that a book which remains for a week in a fifty-centime box will be down to twenty-five centimes next week, and to ten the week after. The more obstinate the stall-keeper, the more the book goes down, until it becomes quite unsaleable. By selling quickly, however, besides realizing money to work with, room is made for another volume which may sell quite as quickly, and on which, if the choice has been judicious, a greater profit is possible.

There are frequenters of the quays—whom we know—who, finding a book that suits them marked at too high a price, wait to purchase it when it has got into a cheaper box. If it does not drop to that, they will leave it rather than buy it. Some books are on sale in this way for

eighteen months and more, and are bought as soon as the dealer thinks fit to reduce them.

There are some books which the stall-keeper who knows what he is about will endeavour to get rid of as soon as possible. These are the classics in many volumes, the complete works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Delille, Laharpe, Anquetil's history, the *Encyclopédie*, collections of Latin authors in translations, etc.

Everyone fights shy of these cumbersome editions of the end of the last century and the beginning of this. Add to this the discredit into which so many of these books have fallen, and you will have no difficulty in understanding the desirability of getting rid of them quickly by making them appear as bargains to the eyes of some half-educated passer-by, the only person for whom these voluminous publications have now any weight or attraction. The sacrifice is never very grievous, for the stall-keepers run no risk when they buy their monuments at less than the value of the paper.

Finally, the volumes that have resisted all temptations, and found no purchaser, have to be cleared out of the boxes after a month or so, and sold either to hawkers or at the public sales, or to the waste-paper merchant, who takes them at about five francs per 100 kilos.

At the auction mart there is a special room, Room No. 16, for the sale of these 'nightingales.' The days reserved for sales of this sort are Thursdays and Fridays. They are announced under the heading of 'La Chambre,' which is a timely hint to the bidder to be on his guard, and not to trust too much to the pompous announcements of M. l'Expert!

But it happens that, thanks to the complaisance of the auctioneer, the dealer often slips into a good room and into a private sale a lot that ought by rights to have gone into No. 16. The bidder thinks he is buying a lot from

some dead man's estate, or some other sale required by law, and he gets the refuse of a stall or shop.

Such a lot is called a 'rapport.' Books sold in this way often bring a price superior to their real value. But generally the buyers are put on their guard by some competitor of the vendor, or by their own scent, and leave the lot on the table without a bid, whereupon the dealer has all the cost of transport and commission. He is foiled; but that, to speak frankly, is what he deserves.

Leaving aside these outlets, which are not in the ordinary course of trade, and are always dangerous, to whom does the stall-keeper now sell?

To this question our chapter on the book-hunters gives a sufficiently authenticated and detailed reply. We need only add a few words as to the *amateur*, who continues to be the special providence and the cash-box of the book-stall man. Ask him, and he will tell you that he depends on the amateur for his livelihood.

The amateur, the real, the genuine, is at the same time his terror. He recognises him afar; his overcoat, his high hat, his decoration, his spectacles, his age, which varies between fifty and seventy, the brand, indefinable but indelible, with which institutes, academies, and learned societies mark their elect, all signal to the stall-keeper that he is being approached by a personage of terrible respectability. He comes. He stops before a box—of bargains, naturally. Soon there is only room for him alone. He wanders backwards and forwards; turns, turns again, upsets the whole arrangement, becomes freer and freer in his signs of disappointment and disgust, and finally moves off growling: 'It is absurd! There is nothing now to be found on the quay.'

And how could he find anything—that is to say, scarce editions, valuable books offered for a few sous—when the stall-keepers know the value of good books, and the large

booksellers are ready to give a sufficiently profitable price for those that now and then reach them? The amateurs who 'do the quays' are thirty years behind the age. They hope to find in a fifteen-sou box a book worth 150 francs. They fancy that stall-keepers do not know how to read. They might perhaps discover that they know quite enough to make them keep their eyes open. The very look of a book, its date, its binding, will show them quite enough to make them put it on one side, and offer it to the clerks from the high-class shops who daily visit the quays. These make no difficulty about the real value of a book, and buy it for what it may be worth their while. Their customers are of a richer class, a new stratum of collectors, very different from those of the olden times, such as bankers, stock-jobbers, literary men, and artists, who have been lucky, dilettante millionaires, conceited upstarts who would cover their opulence with a varnish of elegance, knowledge, and taste, bibliophiles of all kinds, more than one of whom displays his enlightened enthusiasm for books by giving an order to Morgand or Rouquette for a private gentleman's library complete!

Under these conditions, the stall-keeper of the quays must trust for his every-day trade to such customers as those of whom we have sketched the principal types in a former chapter. He could take to himself these couplets, which a wit of 1820 called *Le Libraire* :*

' Venez, lecteurs, chez un libraire
De vous servir toujours jaloux ;
Vos besoins ainsi que vos goûts
Chez moi pourront se satisfaire.
J'offre la *Grammaire* aux auteurs,
Des *vers* à nos jeunes poètes ;
L'*Esprit de lois* aux procureurs,
L'*Essai sur l'homme* à nos coquettes.

* R—— de L——, *Le Chansonnier des Grâces*, 1820, p. 203.

‘ Aux plus célèbres gastronomes
 Je donne *Racine* et *Boileau* ;
La Harpe aux chanteurs du caveau,
Les Nuits d’Young aux astronomes ;
 J’ai *Descartes* pour les joueurs,
Voiture pour toutes les belles,
Lucrèce pour les amateurs,
Martial pour les demoiselles.

‘ Pour le plaideur et l’adversaire
 J’aurai l’*Avocat Patelin* ;
 Le malade et le médecin
 Chez moi consulteront *Molière* ;
 Pour un sexe trop confiant
 Je garde le *Berger fidèle* ;
 Et pour le malheureux amant
 Je réserverai *la Pucelle*.’

The stall-keepers have all these and many more. The journalist, Victor Fournel, under the signature of Bernadille, in the *Français*, in 1879, gave a tolerably complete account of the usual contents of the boxes.*

As he was before us in the field, we prefer to quote verbatim, rather than give the result of our own observations, which might seem to be taken from his article.

‘ Among the elements,’ says Bernadille, ‘ which form the essential and almost invariable stock of the boxes, are such works as those of Buffon, Voltaire, Dulaure, La Harpe (the *Lycée* and the *Histoire des Voyages*), Vertot, the *Jeune Anacharsis*, the *Ecole des mœurs*, the *Beautés* of the history of France, the history of Italy, and all other possible histories, Madame Daciér’s Homer, the Latin classics translated by Desfontaines’ (the Latin classics of Desfontaines are, we believe, confined to a sufficiently bad translation of Virgil; Bernadille was probably thinking of the series by Panckouke and Nisard

* *Le Français*, July 22, 1879.

which were formerly to be met with), 'the works of Bitaubé, of Florian, of Marmontel, etc.

'The quay is the last place where you will often meet with the works of Alexandre Duval, and Madame Cottin, and M. Bignan. You will not go twenty yards without putting your hands on an *Espion turc*, an *Abeille du Parnasse*, or the *Anecdotes de Philippe-Auguste*. It would seem as though books rose from their ashes like the Phoenix. How many copies of these must have been printed! Add to them natural histories, odd volumes of different encyclopædias, of the *Univers pittoresque*, of the *Musée des familles*, numbers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, of the *Correspondant*, of the *Revue contemporaine*, bundles of the *Journal pour tous*, of the *Journal des demoiselles*, and many other similar magazines. The *Lanterne*, the *Cloche*, the *Diable à quatre*, the *Bibliothèque nationale*, at twenty-five centimes a volume, the *Portraits politiques* of Hippolyte Castille, the biographies of Eugène de Mirecourt, have left inexhaustible remainders, which hang about all the boxes.

'Nothing is lost; the smallest trifle is gathered here. You will find heaped up anyhow the annuals of all the departments, and the year-books of every year, old almanacs, old Salon catalogues, catalogues of provincial exhibitions, guides to Paris, guides to France, published at the time of the Restoration, or under Louis-Philippe.

'The stall-keepers will even string up in parcels the feuilletons cut from the newspapers. These are sold to washerwomen, butcher boys, and old women with baskets.

'Another aliment of the bookstall-man is the book published at the expense of the author. Alas! what dreams have gone to ruin there! What *Brisés légères*, what *Premiers chants*, what *Parfums du cœur*, what *Printemps de l'âme*! Volumes of fables abound, as do also translations of Horace in verse. You will find novels

there with titles such as the *Poignard du Vésuve*, by the author of the *Bandits de la Montagne* and the *Souterrains du castel*.

‘I say nothing of the class-books or prize books which troops of unreading schoolboys pour without intermission into this huge common ditch. But a word should be said regarding the odd volumes, which are not always as contemptible as might be thought.

‘In the happy days when I was a book-hunter, I had collected one by one on the quays, for almost nothing, the thirty-six volumes of the *Mémoires secrets de la République des lettres*.

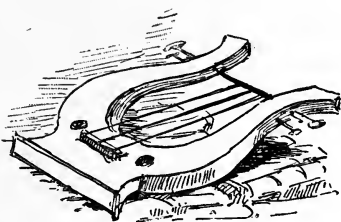
‘Finally, let us add the popular works at low prices, got up for pedlars’ purposes, generally printed with the head of a nail on wrapping paper, with yellow covers, and illustrated with woodcuts that seem to have been engraved with a clasp-knife. These popular volumes come from three or four houses, always the same: Bernardin-Béchet, Le Bailly, Delarue, the *Librairie des villes et des campagnes*, or they simply bear the imprint: *Chez tous les marchands de nouveautés*. Ducray-Duminil, with Messieurs Raban and Pécatier, *Paul et Virginie*, *Estelle et Nemorin*, furnish the romantic department. The occult sciences figure largely: the *Clef des songes*, the *Petit Albert*, the *Nouvel et infaillible oracle des Dames*, the *Urne magique*, the *Grande science cabalistique*, the *Art de tirer les cartes*. The *Langage des fleurs*, the *Secrétaire des amants*, and the *Amours d’Héloïse et d’Abélard*, addressed to sentimental readers; the *Nouveau Catéchisme poissard*, the *Fleur des calembours*, the *1,200 amusements et récréations de société*, the *Mère et la fille Angot*, *Chansonnier nouveau*, for the gay spirits who want to shine in the world; the *Histoire curieuse de Roquelaure*, Piron, even Boccacio, for the lovers of the broad; the lives of Mandrin, of Cartouche, of the famous Collet, the *Histoire véridique de*

Vidocq, to those who delight in strong emotions and gloomy and mysterious adventures.

‘We have also of the same kind, but for higher intelligences who are fond of history, the *Tour de Nesle*, *l’Homme au masque de fer*, the life of Jean Bart, the *Quatre sergents de la Rochelle*, the *Terrible naufrage de la Méduse*. Ah! there is a fine choice, and there is enough and to spare to form the mind and the heart of the masses.’

And there is also enough for a collection of curiosities for anyone interested in the infinitely small of the typographic world. And in that, finally, lies one of the charms which the quays still have for refined and cultivated minds.

Nunc, ite, Liber est.





APPENDIX.

THE BANQUET OF THE BOOKSTALL MEN.



THE BANQUET OF THE BOOKSTALL MEN.



BOVE, in the chapter on the book-hunters, there was a sketch of the excellent Xavier Marmier, in which was quoted (p. 134) the testamentary clause of the lamented Academician, by which he bequeathed to the stall-keepers of the quays the sum of one thousand francs to be used by these good and honest dealers in the paying for a good dinner and spending a happy hour devoted to his memory. This legacy, which at the time made much noise in the press, was duly devoted to the purpose under the management of M. A. Choppin d'Arnouville, who called a meeting of those interested on the 20th of November, 1892, at Véfour's restaurant.

We believe it to be our duty to include in this book the

principal documents regarding this famous banquet. The letter of invitation was as follows :

On the 20th of November, 1892, at seven o'clock in the evening precisely, there will take place the banquet given by M. Xavier Marmier, of the Académie Française, to the bookstall-keepers of the quays on the left bank, under the presidency of M. A. Choppin d'Arnouville.

This ticket of admission is strictly untransferable.

A. CHOPPIN D'ARNOUVILLE,
President.

X.
Delegate,
Quai —.

About ninety-five stall-keepers responded to this invitation, and in one of Véfour's rooms, on the second-floor, there could be seen among the company: Messieurs Corroenne, Duboscq, Lefournier, Ferroud, Brébion, Chevallier, Vaissett, Boucher, Rigaud, Francisque, Carcet, Lecronier, Brouward, Letarouilly, Émille, Degoy, Laporte, Lechanteur, Ernouf, Dorbon junior, Pelletier, Humel, Tronquet, Granjean, Charles, Le Landois senior, Le Landois junior, Le Landois fils, V. Duverget, Gougry junior, Jorel, Jacques, Le Beury, Charlot, Bastid, Chrétien, Viennet, Blondin, Bury, Gibert, Fannier, Fauvergeot, etc.

Many of these amiable bookstall-men had brought their wives with them, some of whom looked charming in their old-fashioned dresses and faces ignorant of the fine art of *maquillage*.

In front of each person, on a little card in chromo-lithography, was the following bill of fare :

BANQUET MARMIER.

Menu du dîner du 20 Novembre, 1892.

Hors-d'œuvre variés.

POTAGES.

Conti et Brunoise.

R E L E V É S.

Filets de barbue aux crevets.
Filets de bœuf au vin de Madère.
Croquettes à la Dauphine.

E N T R É E.

Poulets à la chasseur.

R O T.

Quartier de chevreuil à la sauce poivrade.
Salade.

E N T R E M E T S.

Haricots flageolets à la maître d'hôtel.
Glaces: Petit duc et Parfait.

D E S S E R T.

Corbeilles de fruits.

V I N S.

Madère, Saint-Émilion.
Bourgogne en carafes, Beaune.
Champagne frappé.
Café et cognac.

Cordiality (as per stereotyped phrase) was continuous during the dinner. At dessert, after a toast proposed by M. Corroenne, the present senior of the stall-keepers, M. A. Choppin d'Arnouville gave the following very sympathetic address :

‘GENTLEMEN,

‘It is a dear and gentle memory that presides at this reunion. It is a long time now since the excellent man, whose friend I had the honour to be, conceived the idea of calling you together after his death, and I know how much you appreciate his remembrance of you. In the first place I wish to thank you for the testimony of

pious respect you gave to his mortal remains ; and I wish also to talk to you about him, for he desired not to be forgotten on this occasion.

‘Do not expect, however, that I shall attempt the eulogium of the writer, the learned man, the traveller, who was one of the first to introduce foreign literatures into our intellectual patrimony. This eulogium will be made soon, in academic form, so close to you that you will doubtless be among the first to hear its echoes. I will permit myself to offer no such academic opinion ; but what I know well is that in the works of M. Marmier, which amount to nearly eighty volumes, you will find no bad book, no unhealthy page, no ill-natured line. I know also that the Académie will heartily applaud his successor, at present unknown, when he tells of the sterling virtues of him whom everybody loved, his smiling and ever-ready kindness, the charm of his conversation, and the invariable and poetic gentleness he showed in all things. Gentle as he had been in life, he was gentle at his death, as Bossuet said. He awaited it, as he wrote to me recently, without desiring it or fearing it, like a Christian.

‘Age had come upon him, and he had had to give up his distant journeyings. No longer able to explore foreign libraries, he had formed or completed his own. How much you helped him in doing so ! This library, considerable, interesting, is to-day for his native town a fortune and a relic. It seemed he wished it never to be dispersed. It was his custom at night to have his bachelor’s bed laid among his beloved books, and over there in the depths of Franche-Comté it is still near his books that he sleeps his last sleep.

‘Madame de Staël said that she preferred the stream of the Rue du Bac to the river Rhine. M. Marmier preferred your quays. Neither the most attractive landscapes, nor the mountains of his native place, nor even

the tall pines he loved so much that he called them his cousins, were as much to him as the quays of the left bank. Every day he went along them, past the Louvre and Notre Dame and the Saint Chapelle, giving a glance, perhaps, at the popular statue of the good king, but it was not that horizon which drew him out on that daily and uniform promenade ; it was with you that he had to do, with your stalls, your boxes. He wanted to look them over once more, seeking spoil for his knowledge, opening all your books, old or new—and so happy at every find ! And every day he thus enriched his library or his memory. “What knowledge I owe to them !” he would say, in speaking of you ; “and what happy moments !” Often in returning from the Palais I have found him searching or reading in the bitter wind, and if I ventured to advise him to be careful, he would reply by showing me some little book thrust into the depths of his pocket.

‘He knew you all. With his customary affability, he asked about your affairs, your families, and if by chance any of your children came near him, there was a caress or a sweet for them, offered with the same grace as the cigarette was to the father.

‘In his will he called you good and honest traders ; that is what he knew of your professional usages, your old customs which have lasted for centuries. Are you not the successors of those dealers in books who in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had permission to set up their stalls in the Salle des Pas Perdus, in the Palais de Justice ? Have you not among your ancestors the worthy Achaintre, Latinist of renown, the favourite of M. de Fontanes, and who at the beginning of this century began trading in books on the parapets facing the Institute ?

‘To all your traditions M. Marmier would have recommended you to remain faithful, to seek no changes, for he

thought, like a wise man, that the best is occasionally the enemy of the good.

‘Retain for your quays, he would have told you, their original and unique aspect; those long parapets, garnished with books, the veritable girdle of the palace of science, will always have an attraction for the inquisitive and the learned, and for all a means of learning. In a time of pitiless demolition, keep, gentlemen, this useful souvenir of the past, keep this charming corner of our old Paris.

‘Gentlemen, you will encircle with your attentions and respects the good and lovable old man who desired to thank you; you will not forget, I am sure, this friend of books, nor the testimony of esteem and sympathy in which he held you.’

The most enthusiastic applause greeted this thoughtful and charming address.

Then the president of the delegates in a few affecting words thanked him and assured him that the memory of Xavier Marmier would always be kept green by the bookstall men.

After which there was a little dance, and the festival terminated in all correctness, without a single drunkard being observable among the belated guests, and thus doing honour to the absolute temperance, often doubted, of the Paris bookstall men.

The morning after the banquet we published in the *Figaro* an article on the event and on stall-keepers in general; in this we mentioned Chanmoru, who occupies a considerable space in this volume in the chapter on ‘Stall-keepers of To-day.’

M. Chanmoru having written a very correct rectificatory letter to M. Magnard, the editor of the *Figaro*, we do not hesitate to reproduce it here, in case this worthy bookstall man should think that our statements regarding him

printed some time ago may not be in conformity with the facts of the case.

‘DEAR MR. EDITOR,

‘My attention has to-day been called to your issue of the 21st November, 1892, in which you have something to say about me. Notwithstanding the sympathetic and courteous tone of your article, I must ask your permission to correct a few inaccuracies into which your good faith has been led. I am far from being the eccentric individual and the cause of scandal you seem to imagine; speaking for myself, I may say that everybody working on the public highway is daily exposed to incidents that are often disagreeable.

‘I am, it is true, a socialist; but my convictions and my temperament do not in any way urge me to active propaganda. My opinion is that the propaganda should proceed progressively by instruction, publicity, and good example.

‘I am certain that you will bring to the notice of your readers this correction, the necessity of which all honest people will understand.

‘Awaiting the honour of reading it in your journal, which is so noted for its fairness, I remain, Mr. Editor, your very humble servant,

‘CHANMORU,

‘39, Quai des Grands Augustins.’

And now may this book, written without personal feeling, and which is true as far as the documents we have collected, and those which have been given to us, have led us to think, be free from awaking indignation or anger among the stall-keepers passed in review, the most eccentric of whom, it must be confessed, have occupied us most. We have endeavoured to work for the morrow,

and we care little for any ephemeral rancour we may have caused in a few exalted bosoms.

If the majority of our friends of the quays appreciate the good-faith of this book which is dedicated to them, we shall be fully satisfied. Had we given the same meed of praise to every gentleman of the parapet, our gallery of portraits would have been of no interest, and our book unnecessary.





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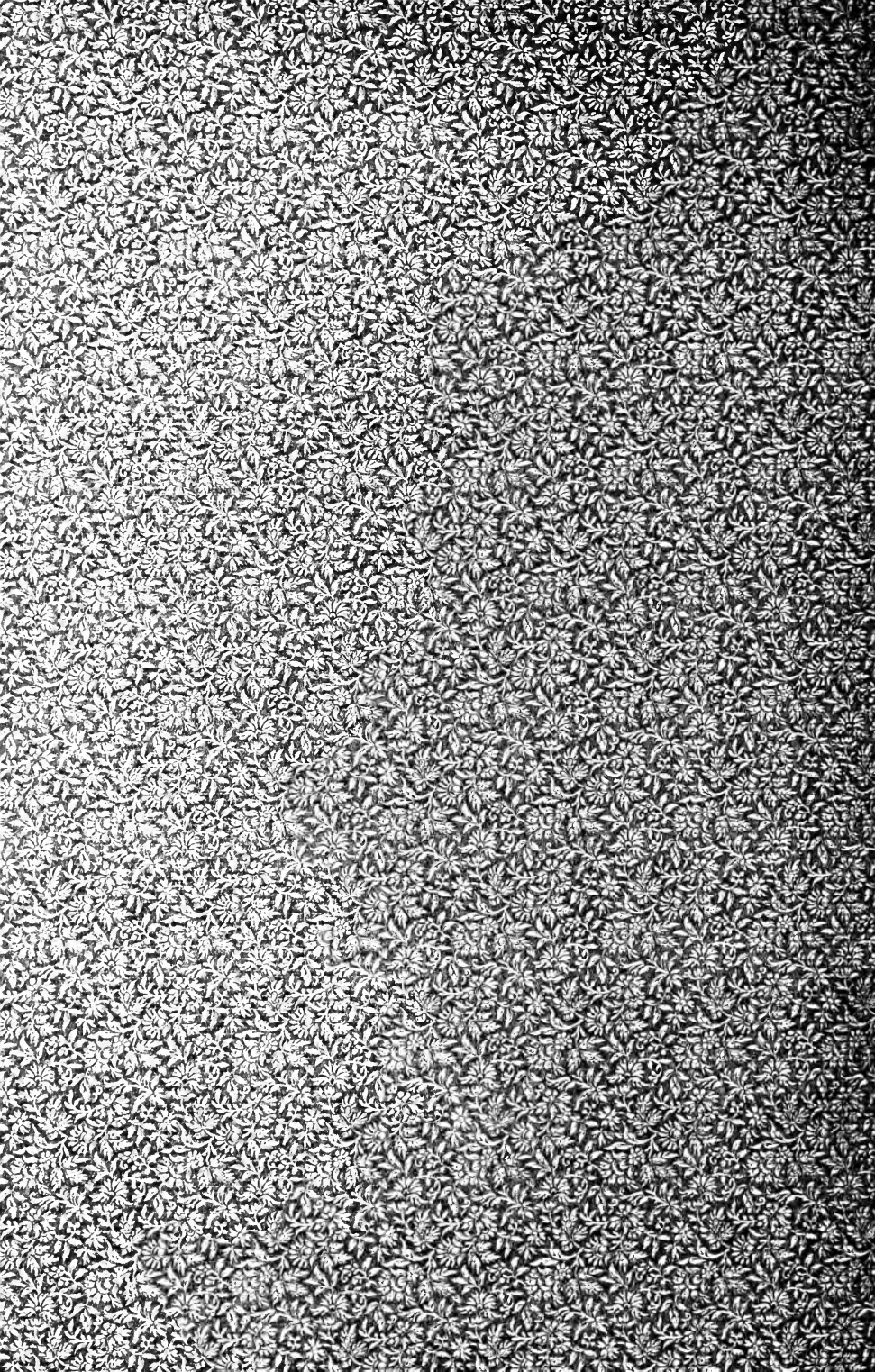
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